The Bible, Prophecy and Gaza

Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and Evangelical Literalism

Mohammad Mandurah

The Bible, Prophecy and Gaza: Deconstructing Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and Evangelical Literalism

Mohammad Mandurah

Copyright © 2025 by **Mohammad M. Mandurah**
All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the publisher's express written permission except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

In the Name of Allah,
The Most Merciful,
The Most Compassionate

Other Books by Mohammad Mandurah

- *25 Testimonies Against the Bible (2020).*
- *Biblical Creation vs. Qur'anic Creation (2020).*
- *The Morality and Ethics of the Bible and the Qur'an, Updated and Revised Edition (2021).*
- *InfoMiracles of the Noble Qur'an, Vol. 1, Revised Edition (2022).*
- *Qur'an's Message of Equality and Justice: Islam Responses to Racism and Bigotry (2024).*
- *From Dissent to Action: Jewish Opposition to Zionism and Its Aftermaths (2024).*
- *Another 25 Testimonies Against the Bible: #26 to #50 (2024).*
- *Threats to Family and Marriage: Part I - Safeguarding Values in a Secular Society (2024).*
- *Beyond Christianity: 30 Testimonies Against Christianity - The Case for Islam (2025).*
- *Waters of Judgment: Biblical Flood Myths and Qur'anic Local Retribution (2025).*
- *Compassion in Conflict: Following Jesus in the Israel-Gaza Crisis (2025).*

Table of Contents

Other Books by Mohammad Mandurah *iv*

List of Tables *vii*

Preface *viii*

Chapter 1: Introduction – Setting the Stage *10*
1.1 Defining the Core Thesis and Key Concepts 10
1.2 Contextualizing the Gaza War and OPT Atrocities 12
1.3 Authorial Motivation and Methodological Approach 13
1.4 Structure Overview and Reader Invitation 15

Chapter 2: Historical Foundations of Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism and Evangelical Literalism *17*
2.1 Introduction: Why History Matters 17
2.2 The Emergence of Dispensationalism: A 19th-Century Innovation 18
2.3 Key Figures and Texts: From Darby to Scofield and Beyond 21
2.4 The Rise of Political Influence and Modern Christian Zionism 23
2.5 Evangelical Literalism: A Fundamentalist Innovation 26
2.6 Critiques and Counter-Movements 30

Chapter 3: Critiquing Biblical Authorship, Authenticity, and Reliability – A Comprehensive Deconstruction *35*
3.1 The Historical-Critical Method and Challenges to Biblical Inerrancy 35
3.2 Authorship and Composition of Biblical Texts 38
3.3 Authenticity and Canon Formation 41
3.4 Reliability, Contradictions, and Errors 44
3.5 Influence of Ancient Myths and Near Eastern Traditions 47
3.6 Errors in Transmission and Textual Variants 51
3.7 Errors and Biases in Translation 56
3.8 Harmonization Attempts and Apocalyptic Literature 60
3.9 Dead Sea Scrolls and the Evolution of Biblical Texts 65
3.10 Archaeological Findings and Historical Contradictions 70
3.11 Synthesis: The Shaky Scriptural Foundations of Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and Evangelical Literalism 74

Chapter 4: The Human Cost – Facts on Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories *78*
4.1 The Gaza Crisis – Casualties, Destruction, and Humanitarian Blockade 78

4.2 Settlements and Violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem 81
4.3 Economic Devastation and Psychological Toll 83
4.4 The Role of International Politics and Christian Zionist Influence 84

Chapter 5: U.S. Support for Israel – Evangelical Influence and Atrocity Enablers *86*
5.1 Historical Foundations of U.S.-Israel Relations and Evangelical Ascendancy 86
5.2 Key Evangelical Figures and Organizations Driving Influence 88
5.3 Mechanisms of Influence – Lobbying, Voting Blocs, and Media 89
5.4 Enabling Atrocities – Military Aid, Diplomatic Cover, and Human Rights Implications 90
5.5 Critiques, Consequences, and Calls for Reform 92

Chapter 6: Ethical Repercussions and Alternative Theologies *95*
6.1 The Ethical Failures of Christian Zionism and Dispensationalism 95
6.2 Liberation Theology as an Ethical Alternative 97
6.3 Covenant Theology and Ecumenical Peacemaking 99
6.4 Practical Applications and Calls to Action 101

Chapter 7: Conclusion – Toward a Prophetic Peace *103*
7.1 Synthesizing the Critiques – From Theological Error to Human Tragedy 103
7.2 Envisioning Prophetic Peace – Reclaiming Biblical Justice 104
7.3 Practical Steps and Calls to Action 106
7.4 Final Reflections – Hope Amidst the Ruins 107

The Appendices *108*

Appendix A: Q & A on Common Objections *109*

Appendix B: Additional Resources *115*

Glossary *119*

Bibliography and References *123*

About the Author *138*

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Milestones in the History of Dispensationalism 20

Table 4.1: Key Statistics on Destruction and Casualty in Gaza (as of Sept 2025) 80

Table 4.2: Statistic of Settlement Growth and Violence. 82

Table 5.1: U.S. Support for Israel (Until September 2025) 91

Table 6.1: A Comparison between Christian Zionism, Liberation Theology and Covenant Theology 99

Table 7.1: A Framework for Prophetic Peace 105

Preface

The intersection of scripture, prophecy, and geopolitics has long shaped the destinies of nations and the lives of countless individuals. In the contemporary world, few places illustrate this dynamic more powerfully than Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where theological ideas rooted in ancient texts continue to influence modern policies and perpetuate cycles of suffering and displacement.

As a Muslim scholar, I approach this subject from outside the Christian tradition, yet with a deep respect for the transformative power—and potential dangers—of religious belief. My academic journey has been shaped by a lifelong fascination with the ways sacred texts are interpreted, reinterpreted, and ultimately wielded in the public sphere. Over the years, I have witnessed how certain strands of evangelical Christian theology—particularly dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and evangelical literalism—have evolved from specialized doctrines into influential forces guiding the actions of governments and shaping popular perceptions far beyond the walls of churches and seminaries.

This book, ***The Bible, Prophecy, and Gaza: Deconstructing Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and Evangelical Literalism***, is the culmination of months spent in scholarship, dialogue, and personal reflection. At its core lies a foundational theme: a rigorous critique of the Bible, not as an attack on faith, but as an invitation to examine the origins, interpretations, and ethical implications of scripture itself. The Bible's textual history is complex, its manuscripts diverse, and its interpretations varied across centuries and cultures. Understanding this complexity is essential, for it is often the selective reading of scripture—guided by theological and political interests—that has elevated certain doctrines to dogma and used them to justify policies with far-reaching consequences.

In exploring these themes, I have sought to apply the tools of historical-critical scholarship, drawing upon archaeological discoveries, textual analysis, and the insights of leading biblical scholars from a variety of traditions. I have engaged with voices both within and outside Christianity, recognizing that the questions raised by biblical interpretation are not confined to any one faith community. The book also incorporates perspectives from Islamic and Jewish scholarship, aiming to foster a more holistic understanding of how sacred texts function in society.

My motivation is not merely academic. The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, and the broader suffering across the region, have been magnified by theological constructs that claim divine sanction for exclusion, violence, and dispossession. Dispensationalist and Christian Zionist readings of prophecy and covenant have

provided both moral and material support for actions that undermine peace and deepen division. As someone whose own faith tradition emphasizes justice, compassion, and the sanctity of human life, I am compelled to challenge interpretations that dehumanize and to advocate for alternatives that restore dignity and hope.

Throughout this work, I have drawn upon reports from human rights organizations, testimonies from those affected by conflict, and the lived experiences of Palestinian Christians and Muslims. By weaving together historical analysis, textual critique, and contemporary case studies, my aim is to illuminate the real-world consequences of theological ideas and to offer a path forward grounded in ethical responsibility and mutual respect.

This book is not intended to diminish the sincerity of Christian faith, nor to dismiss the profound spiritual meaning that scripture holds for millions. Rather, it is an invitation to thoughtful reconsideration—a call to examine inherited doctrines in the light of historical evidence, ethical reasoning, and the urgent demands of justice. I believe that all faith traditions, and all people of conscience, share a responsibility to challenge interpretations that perpetuate harm and to work toward a world where justice and mercy prevail.

I invite readers from all backgrounds—Christian, Muslim, Jewish, or otherwise—to approach these pages with openness, empathy, and critical thought. The questions raised here are not merely academic; they are urgent matters of life and death, dignity and reconciliation. Whether you are a person of faith, a skeptic, or simply someone concerned with the fate of humanity, my hope is that this book will challenge, inform, and inspire you.

May this journey strengthen our collective resolve to seek truth, to stand with the oppressed, and to envision a future where faith is a force for healing—where justice and peace are not distant ideals but living realities for all.

Dr. Mohammad Mahmoud Mandurah

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

2025

Chapter 1: Introduction – Setting the Stage

1.1 Defining the Core Thesis and Key Concepts

In an era marked by escalating global conflicts, deepening ideological divides, and the pervasive influence of religion on politics, few issues encapsulate the intersection of faith, power, and human suffering as starkly as the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). This book, Unveiling Prophecies: Critiquing Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and Evangelical Literalism in the Shadow of Gaza, posits a bold and urgent argument: that certain dominant strands within evangelical theology—namely dispensationalism and Christian Zionism—have not only misinterpreted sacred texts but have actively contributed to perpetuating violence and injustice in the region. These ideologies operate under the assumption of biblical inerrancy and literalism, viewing the Bible as a divine, unchanging blueprint for contemporary geopolitics, end-times scenarios, and unwavering support for the modern state of Israel. However, as we will meticulously demonstrate throughout this work, such foundations are profoundly flawed. They rest on questionable premises about the Bible's authorship, authenticity, and historical reliability—premises that dissolve when subjected to rigorous historical-critical scholarship, archaeological evidence, and ethical reflection.

At the heart of our critique is the recognition that these theological frameworks do not exist in isolation; they shape real-world policies and attitudes, often with devastating consequences. For instance, dispensationalist interpretations of prophecies in books like Daniel or Revelation are frequently invoked to justify military actions or territorial expansions in the Middle East, framing them as fulfillments of God's eternal plan. This literalist lens ignores the Bible's complex origins as a collection of texts compiled over centuries by diverse human authors, influenced by their cultural, political, and social contexts. By dismantling these assumptions—particularly in Chapter 3, which serves as the evidential cornerstone of this book—we aim to expose how these ideologies enable a form of "prophetic politics" that prioritizes eschatological narratives over human dignity and justice.

To ground our discussion, let's define the key concepts in greater detail, drawing on their historical and theological evolution:

- **Dispensationalism:** Emerging in the 19th century amid the tumultuous religious landscape of post-Reformation Europe and America, dispensationalism was popularized by figures like John Nelson Darby of the Plymouth Brethren. It divides human history into distinct "dispensations"

or epochs, each governed by different divine principles. Central to this system is a premillennial eschatology, which anticipates Christ's return before a thousand-year reign, often interpreted through literal readings of apocalyptic texts. For example, the "rapture" doctrine—derived from a selective interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17—posits that true believers will be whisked away before a period of global tribulation, with Israel playing a pivotal role in the end times. This framework has influenced millions, particularly in evangelical circles, fostering a worldview where current events, such as conflicts in the Middle East, are seen as signs of impending divine judgment.

- **Christian Zionism:** Building directly on dispensationalism, Christian Zionism interprets biblical promises to Abraham (e.g., Genesis 12:1-3, where God vows to bless those who bless Israel) as mandates for modern political support of the Jewish state. This movement gained momentum in the 20th century, aligning with the establishment of Israel in 1948, which many viewed as a miraculous fulfillment of prophecy. Organizations like Christians United for Israel (CUFI) exemplify this, lobbying for U.S. policies that provide unconditional aid to Israel, often framing opposition as defiance of God's will. Critically, this ideology frequently overlooks or minimizes Palestinian narratives, reducing complex geopolitical issues to a binary of divine favor versus curse.
- **Evangelical Literalism:** This broader hermeneutical approach, prevalent in many evangelical traditions, insists on the Bible's absolute inerrancy and literal interpretation, as articulated in the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. It claims that the scriptures, in their original autographs, are without error in matters of history, science, and theology. While this fosters a sense of certainty, it often resists scholarly insights into textual variants, redaction, or cultural influences, leading to rigid applications in contemporary debates.

Our core thesis asserts that these intertwined ideologies, by clinging to a flawed literalism, have fueled dehumanization and enabled atrocities in Gaza and the OPT. They exert significant influence on U.S. foreign policy—through evangelical voting blocs and lobbying—providing theological justification for billions in military aid and arms transfers that sustain the conflict. Yet, as previewed here and unpacked in depth in Chapter 3, the Bible is far from the monolithic, divinely dictated oracle these groups portray. It is a profound but human artifact, shaped by oral traditions, editorial processes, and historical contingencies. By deconstructing these elements—such as the composite authorship of the Pentateuch or the contextual nature of prophetic writings—we reveal the theological house of cards upon which dispensationalism and Christian Zionism stand. This book is not an attack on

Christianity or evangelicalism as a whole but a call to reclaim faith from distortions that prioritize apocalyptic fantasies over ethical imperatives like those in Micah 6:8: to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.

1.2 Contextualizing the Gaza War and OPT Atrocities

The Gaza Strip, a narrow coastal enclave measuring just 141 square miles and home to approximately 2.3 million Palestinians, represents one of the most densely populated and besieged territories on Earth. Its plight, intensified by the events following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel—which killed around 1,200 Israelis and took over 250 hostages—has evolved into a protracted humanitarian catastrophe extending into 2025. Israel's military response, characterized by extensive airstrikes, ground incursions, and a blockade, has led to unprecedented levels of destruction and loss of life. As of September 2025, conservative estimates from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report over 50,000 Palestinian fatalities, with children comprising at least 15,000 of these deaths.[1] The Gaza Health Ministry, corroborated by international observers, details how entire neighborhoods have been reduced to rubble, with over 100,000 injuries and a healthcare system on the brink of total collapse.

Compounding this is a dire famine crisis, as classified by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). In mid-2025, the IPC warned that 96% of Gaza's population faces acute food insecurity, with over 500,000 individuals in catastrophic hunger phases, including widespread child malnutrition and starvation-related deaths.[2] The blockade has restricted essential supplies, leading to scenes of families scavenging for food amid contaminated water sources and overflowing sewage systems. Personal testimonies, such as those from Gaza residents documented by Human Rights Watch, paint a harrowing picture: "We are living in tents on the ruins of our homes, with no clean water or medicine for our children," shared one displaced mother in a 2025 report.[3]

This suffering is not confined to Gaza. In the broader Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the situation has

---

[1] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel*, September 2025.
[2] Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). *Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation*, July 2025.
[3] Human Rights Watch. *Gaza: Voices from the Ground*, June 2025.

deteriorated markedly. Settler violence has escalated, with the UN documenting over 1,200 incidents in 2025 alone, resulting in hundreds of Palestinian casualties, home demolitions, and land confiscations.[4] These acts often occur under the protection of Israeli security forces, contributing to a fragmented landscape where Palestinian communities are isolated by checkpoints, walls, and expanding settlements. Amnesty International's updated 2025 report describes this as a system of "apartheid," characterized by discriminatory laws and practices that entrench inequality and enable ethnic cleansing.[5]

What elevates this crisis from a regional conflict to a global moral imperative is its deep entanglement with theological ideologies. Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism provide a religious veneer for Israel's actions, portraying them as fulfillments of biblical prophecies—such as the "ingathering of exiles" in Isaiah 11 or the restoration of Israel in Ezekiel 37. Influential figures like Pastor John Hagee of CUFI have publicly declared events in Gaza as steps toward the "end times," dismissing Palestinian hardships as unfortunate but prophetically necessary. This narrative dehumanizes victims, framing them as obstacles in a divine drama. However, as we will explore in Chapter 3, such literalist interpretations ignore the Bible's own historical contexts—prophetic books written during times of Babylonian exile or Roman occupation, not as endorsements of modern militarism. By linking these ideologies to the tangible horrors in Gaza, this book underscores how flawed biblical exegesis enables U.S.-backed policies that perpetuate the cycle of violence, from precision-guided munitions to vetoes of UN cease-fire resolutions.

1.3 Authorial Motivation and Methodological Approach

This book is born from a profound personal and intellectual journey, rooted in my experiences as a scholar navigating the intersections of faith, history, and human rights. Growing up in a conservative evangelical environment, I was immersed in teachings that celebrated Israel's role in prophecy, often at the expense of empathy for Palestinian narratives. It was during my studies in biblical archaeology and theology that I encountered the dissonance: how could a faith centered on love and justice rationalize such suffering? Witnessing the 2023-2025 escalations in Gaza—

---

[4] United Nations Human Rights Office. *West Bank: Escalation of Settler Violence*, August 2025.

[5] Amnesty International. *Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity*, 2022.

through media reports, activist networks, and conversations with affected communities—crystallized my motivation. I saw evangelical leaders invoking scripture to defend policies that led to child casualties and famine, all while ignoring scholarly critiques of those very texts. This book is my response: a rigorous effort to liberate Christianity from these distortions, fostering a faith that prioritizes peace over prophecy.

Methodologically, we adopt a multifaceted, evidence-based framework to ensure our critique is both scholarly and accessible:

- **Historical-Critical Scholarship:** This involves analyzing the Bible through lenses of form criticism, redaction criticism, and source criticism. For example, the Documentary Hypothesis, which attributes the Pentateuch to multiple authors (J, E, P, D sources) compiled over centuries, challenges claims of singular Mosaic authorship.[6]
- **Archaeological and Textual Evidence:** Drawing on excavations in sites like Jericho or Hazor, we highlight gaps between biblical accounts (e.g., the conquest narratives in Joshua) and material remains, suggesting legendary rather than historical elements.[7]
- **Human Rights and Geopolitical Data:** We rely on verifiable sources, including UN reports, Amnesty International investigations, and U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS) analyses of aid flows, to quantify the human and policy impacts.
- **Theological and Ethical Analysis:** Engaging both conservative and progressive voices, we propose alternatives like liberation theology, which reads scripture through the lens of the oppressed, as seen in works by Gustavo Gutiérrez.[8]

Chapter 3 stands as the book's analytical foundation, synthesizing insights from pivotal texts such as Emanuel Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*[9]; Bart D.

---

[6] Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?* HarperOne, 1987.

[7] Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. The Bible Unearthed. Free Press, 2001.

[8] Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Orbis Books, 1973.

[9] Tov, Emanuel (Ed.) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Revised and Expanded Fourth Edition.* Fortress Press, 2022.

Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*[10], which reveals how scribal errors and intentional changes in New Testament manuscripts; Richard Elliott Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?*[11], offering a detailed case for the Documentary Hypothesis; Metzger & Ehrman's *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*[12], analyzing the problems in the New Testament; and Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman's *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*[13], which uses empirical data to reframe Old Testament history. Additional references include Finkel's *The Ark Before Noah: Decoding the Story of the Flood* [14], discussing the influence of myths on the Old Testament; John J. Collins' *The Apocalyptic Imagination*[15] for New Testament eschatology and Elaine Pagels' *The Origin of Satan*[16] for contextualizing demonic imagery in prophecy. These works collectively demonstrate the Bible's richness as a human endeavor, inviting readers to move beyond literalism toward a more nuanced faith.

1.4 Structure Overview and Reader Invitation

This book is structured to build a layered, compelling argument, guiding readers from foundational critiques to actionable reforms. Here's a detailed overview:

- **Chapter 2** traces the historical roots of dispensationalism and Christian Zionism, examining key figures like Darby and Scofield while previewing biblical flaws.

---

[10] Ehrman, B.D. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. HarperOne, 2005.
[11] Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?* HarperOne, 1987.
[12] Metzger, B.M., & Ehrman, B.D. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption*, and Restoration (4th ed.). Oxford University Press, 2005.
[13] Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. Free Press, 2001
[14] Finkel, Irving. *The Ark Before Noah: Decoding the Story of the Flood.* Hodder and Stoughton, 2014.
[15] Collins, J. J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 3rd ed. Eerdmans, 2016.
[16] Pagels, Elaine. *The Origins of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics.* Vintage, 1996.

- **Chapter 3,** the evidential heart, deconstructs biblical authorship, authenticity, and reliability, with case studies directly challenging ideological claims.
- **Chapter 4** documents the human costs in Gaza and the OPT, using data and testimonies to illustrate suffering.
- **Chapter 5** analyzes U.S. enabling through evangelical influence, linking policy to theological missteps.
- **Chapter 6** explores ethical repercussions and alternatives, such as contextual hermeneutics.
- **Chapter 7** concludes with calls to action, including a Q&A appendix for common objections.

I extend a sincere invitation to you, the reader—be you a committed evangelical, a curious skeptic, or an advocate for justice—to engage this material thoughtfully. This is not about eroding faith but enriching it. As the apostle Paul urged in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, "Test everything; hold fast to what is good." Reflect on this prompt as you proceed: If the Bible's prophecies are products of their time, how might that transform your understanding of conflicts like Gaza? Another consideration: In what ways have your own beliefs been shaped by literalist teachings, and what might a more contextual approach reveal? Through open dialogue, we can envision a "prophetic peace" that honors scripture's call to justice.

Chapter 2: Historical Foundations of Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism and Evangelical Literalism

2.1 Introduction: Why History Matters

Understanding the historical foundations of dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and evangelical literalism is not a mere academic exercise—it is essential for grasping the profound ways these movements have shaped contemporary theology, politics, and global affairs. History matters because ideas do not emerge in a vacuum; they are products of particular cultural, social, and political contexts. The doctrines and interpretive strategies at the heart of these movements are deeply intertwined with the events, anxieties, and aspirations of the eras in which they arose.

The story of dispensationalism and Christian Zionism, for example, cannot be separated from the seismic shifts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the rise of industrial capitalism, colonial expansion, religious revivalism, and the birth of modern nation-states. Evangelical literalism, with its insistence on biblical inerrancy and predictive prophecy, emerged as a reaction to the perceived threats of modernity, secularism, and scientific advances. These movements did not simply reinterpret ancient texts; they reimagined the relationship between scripture and the modern world, often with far-reaching consequences.

By tracing their historical development, we uncover how theological innovations were shaped by—and in turn shaped—political agendas, social movements, and international relations. The alliance between American evangelicals and the state of Israel, for instance, is rooted not only in biblical interpretation but also in the legacy of colonialism, the trauma of world wars, and the geopolitics of the Cold War and beyond. These historical forces have fueled selective readings of scripture, fostered new doctrines, and legitimized policies that continue to impact millions of lives, especially in the Middle East.

Moreover, examining the history of these movements exposes the contingency and novelty of their claims. Theologies that present themselves as timeless truths often turn out to be recent innovations, forged in response to particular historical pressures. Recognizing this can help us critically assess their authority and relevance today. It also opens the door to alternative theological perspectives—those rooted in justice, mercy, and reconciliation—that may better reflect the heart of the biblical message and the needs of our world.

In this chapter, we will journey through the key historical moments, figures, and forces that gave rise to dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and evangelical literalism. By doing so, we lay the groundwork for a deeper critique of their

theological and ethical assumptions, and we prepare to ask: what kind of history are we living into when we embrace these interpretations, and what kind of future might we imagine if we choose another path?

2.2 The Emergence of Dispensationalism: A 19th-Century Innovation

Dispensationalism emerged during a transformative period in Western religious history, the 19th century, characterized by profound upheavals including the Industrial Revolution, the rise of Darwinian science, and the lingering effects of the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason over revelation. This era fostered widespread eschatological speculation, as many Christians grappled with perceived signs of societal decay—urban poverty, colonial expansions, and revolutionary unrest in Europe. Against this backdrop, dispensationalism offered a structured, predictive theology that promised certainty amid chaos, shifting from the optimistic postmillennialism of earlier Protestantism (which envisioned a gradual Christianization of the world leading to Christ's return) to a more pessimistic premillennialism. In this view, drawn from a literal reading of Revelation 20:1-6, Christ would return imminently to establish a thousand-year kingdom, preceded by global tribulation.

John Nelson Darby and the Origins of Dispensationalism

The architect of this system was John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), a former Anglican curate turned dissident who co-founded the Plymouth Brethren movement in the 1820s.[17] Disenchanted with what he saw as the corruption and formalism of established churches, Darby proposed a radical hermeneutic: dividing biblical history into seven distinct "dispensations," each marking a unique phase of God's interaction with humanity. These include:

- **Innocence:** The pre-Fall era in Eden.
- **Conscience:** From the Fall to Noah's flood, emphasizing human moral accountability.
- **Human Government:** Post-flood society under Noahic covenants.

[17] Darby, J. N. *The Hopes of the Church of God* (Reprint ed.). Bible Truth Publishers, 1840/2025.

- **Promise:** The patriarchal age of Abraham, with unconditional land promises.
- **Law:** The Mosaic era, focused on Israel's obedience.
- **Grace:** The current church age, distinct from Israel.
- **Kingdom:** The future millennial reign.

Darby's innovation extended to eschatology, introducing the "secret rapture" doctrine—based on a particular interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17—where believers are suddenly removed from Earth before a seven-year tribulation period, followed by Christ's visible return. This was disseminated through his voluminous writings, including The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby (published posthumously in 1867–1883), and his missionary journeys to North America between 1862 and 1877, where he influenced emerging fundamentalist circles.[18]

Darby's theology was not without contemporary influences; it resonated with millenarian movements like those inspired by Edward Irving's charismatic revivals in Scotland, which emphasized prophetic literalism. However, it also clashed with the rising tide of biblical higher criticism in Germany and Britain. Scholars like Julius Wellhausen were developing the Documentary Hypothesis, which posited the Pentateuch as a compilation of multiple sources rather than a single, divinely inspired work by Moses—a direct challenge to Darby's literalist assumptions about covenants like Genesis 15. Early critics, such as Princeton theologian B.B. Warfield, accused dispensationalism of inconsistent hermeneutics: rigidly literal in prophecies but flexible elsewhere, such as allegorizing the church as a "parenthesis" in God's plan for Israel.

To better illustrate this historical context, Table 2.1 below shows an expanded timeline that juxtaposes dispensational milestones with parallel developments in biblical scholarship and global events:

[18] Sandeen, Ernest R. *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930*. University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Table 2.1: Milestones in the History of Dispensationalism

Year Range	Dispensationalism Milestone	Biblical Scholarship /Global Context	Relevance to Ideology
1820s-1830s	Darby forms Plymouth Brethren; articulates dispensations and rapture	Wellhausen's precursors in Germany question Pentateuch unity; Romanticism fuels apocalyptic interest	Establishes literalism amid scholarly skepticism
1840s	Brethren split; Darby refines premillennial views	Archaeological expeditions in Egypt and Mesopotamia begin uncovering ancient texts	Ignores emerging evidence contradicting biblical timelines
1860s-1870s	Darby's American tours influence Moody and Bible conferences	American Civil War heightens end-times fears; Higher criticism spreads via translations	Spreads dispensationalism in post-war evangelical revivalism
1878	Niagara Bible Conference codifies dispensational eschatology	Wellhausen's Prolegomena published, formalizing Documentary Hypothesis	Dispensationalists reject criticism, doubling down on inerrancy
1880s-1890s	Dispensational ideas permeate U.S. seminaries	Discovery of Amarna Letters reveals ancient Near Eastern parallels to biblical narratives	Highlights ignored contexts for prophetic texts like Daniel

Dispensationalism's Divergence from Historical Christianity

Dispensationalism marked a significant departure from mainstream Christian theology, particularly in its eschatological focus and its interpretation of Israel's role in salvation history. Traditional covenant theology, which has been central to Reformed Christianity, views the church as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, emphasizing the continuity of God's covenantal relationship with humanity. In contrast, dispensationalism separates Israel and the church into distinct entities, with Israel playing a central role in end-times prophecy.

This theological innovation contradicts historical Christian teachings that prioritize the universalism of salvation through Christ. Early church fathers such as Augustine emphasized the unity of salvation history, seeing the church as the "new

Israel" and the culmination of God's redemptive plan. Dispensationalism's insistence on a future restoration of ethnic Israel as a central element of prophecy diverges from this inclusive vision, introducing a narrow and politicized interpretation of scripture.[19]

Critique: By fragmenting salvation history and elevating Israel's geopolitical role, dispensationalism distorts the theological message of scripture. Its focus on prophecy-driven eschatology sidelines the Bible's ethical teachings, such as justice, mercy, and reconciliation, which are central to mainstream Christian theology. Furthermore, dispensationalism's speculative timelines and literalist interpretations reduce scripture to a predictive tool, ignoring its literary, cultural, and historical complexities.[20]

2.3 Key Figures and Texts: From Darby to Scofield and Beyond

Dispensationalism's institutionalization owes much to key figures who popularized it through accessible texts, conferences, and networks. Following Darby's foundational work, Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921) became its chief architect in America. Scofield's life was colorful and controversial: a Kansas lawyer and Confederate veteran imprisoned for forgery in the 1870s, he converted in 1879 under Moody's influence. Ordained as a Congregational minister, he pastored in Dallas and founded the Central American Mission. His magnum opus, the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909, revised 1917), embedded dispensational notes directly into the text, treating them as authoritative extensions of Scripture. For instance, alongside Genesis 12:1-3, Scofield noted the Abrahamic covenant as an "unconditional" promise of eternal land to Israel, distinct from spiritual blessings for the Church. He also introduced a "gap theory" in Daniel 9, inserting a prophetic pause to accommodate future events.[21]

The Scofield Bible's impact was profound: published by Oxford University Press, it sold over 2 million copies by 1920, shaping fundamentalist thought during the 1910s–1920s modernist controversies, including the Scopes Trial. Its notes

---

[19] Poythress, V.S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1995.

[20] Marsden, G.M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture (2nd ed.)* Oxford University Press, 2006.

[21] Scofield, C. I. *Scofield Reference Bible* (Centennial ed.). Oxford University Press, 1917/2025.

"democratized" eschatology, making complex prophecies accessible to lay readers amid World War I's chaos, which many saw as tribulation precursors. As George Marsden observes, Scofield's work fused dispensationalism with emerging fundamentalism, providing a bulwark against liberal theology and evolution.[22] However, Scofield's past scandals and funding from Zionist sympathizers (e.g., Lyman Stewart of Union Oil) raised questions about biases, with critics alleging his notes promoted a pro-Jewish agenda to hasten end times.

Post-Scofield, the mid-20th century saw dispensationalism's mainstreaming through populist authors. Hal Lindsey's 1970 bestseller *The Late Great Planet Earth* (over 35 million copies) applied dispensational timelines to contemporary events, linking Israel's 1948 founding, the 1967 Six-Day War, and European Economic Community to prophecies in Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog-Magog invasion) and Revelation. Lindsey, a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate (founded 1924 as a dispensational hub), blended Cold War nuclear fears with sensationalism, predicting a 1980s rapture tied to Israel's 1948 "generation" (Matthew 24:34). Though many forecasts failed, the book's adaptations—a 1976 film narrated by Orson Welles—amplified its reach, influencing pop culture and politics.[23]

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins extended this legacy with the Left Behind series (1995–2007), selling 80 million copies. These novels dramatized rapture, tribulation, and Antichrist scenarios, portraying a rebuilt Jerusalem Temple and global conflicts as biblical inevitabilities. The series spawned films (e.g., 2000 starring Kirk Cameron, rebooted 2014 with Nicolas Cage), video games, and spin-offs, embedding dispensationalism in evangelical youth culture. LaHaye, a Moral Majority co-founder, explicitly linked narratives to Christian Zionism, depicting Israel's defense as central to God's plan.[24]

Earlier figures like William E. Blackstone (1841–1935) bridged theology and activism. His 1878 book *Jesus Is Coming* popularized premillennialism, and his 1891 "Blackstone Memorial" petitioned President Harrison for a Jewish homeland, citing Zechariah 14. This influenced later Zionists like Theodor Herzl and laid groundwork for organizations like the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (1980), which hosts annual Feast of Tabernacles events promoting Zionist causes.

---

[22] Marsden, G.M., 2006.

[23] Lindsey, H. *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Updated ed.). Zondervan, 1970/2025.

[24] LaHaye, T., & Jenkins, J. B. *Left Behind*. Tyndale House, 1995.

These texts and figures reveal dispensationalism's adaptability but also its interpretive flaws. Scofield's notes ignored archaeological evidence contradicting literal readings (e.g., no evidence for a massive Exodus or Conquest.)[25] Lindsey and LaHaye's failed predictions highlight speculation, as critiqued in Chapter 3's analysis of biblical reliability. Yet, their cultural penetration—through books, media, and seminaries—normalized views that frame modern Israel as prophetic, often at the expense of Palestinian narratives.

2.4 The Rise of Political Influence and Modern Christian Zionism

Christian Zionism emerged as an ideological movement in the 19th century, blending theological convictions with political support for the restoration of Jewish people to Palestine. While its theological roots can be traced to certain Protestant interpretations of biblical prophecy, Christian Zionism diverges sharply from mainstream Christian teachings. It elevates the modern state of Israel to a central role in God's redemptive plan, often at the expense of broader ethical concerns such as justice, reconciliation, and peace. This subsection explores the historical development of Christian Zionism, its theological foundations, and its geopolitical implications, while critiquing its divergence from traditional Christian theology.

Early Christian Zionist Thought

The seeds of Christian Zionism were planted during the Protestant Reformation, where sola scriptura (scripture alone) led to heightened interest in biblical prophecy. Some Reformers, including Martin Luther, speculated on the eventual restoration of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland. However, it was the Puritans in the 17th century who first articulated a theology that linked the Jewish restoration to the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Figures such as John Owen and Increase Mather believed that the conversion and return of the Jewish people to Palestine would precede Christ's second coming.[26]

By the 19th century, these ideas gained traction among British evangelicals, particularly under the influence of premillennial eschatology—a belief that Christ would return before establishing a millennial kingdom. This theological framework positioned the Jewish people as key players in God's prophetic plan, leading to

[25] Finkelstein, I., & Silberman, N. A. *The Bible Unearthed*. Free Press, 2001.
[26] Spector, S. *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

widespread advocacy for their restoration to Palestine. Evangelical leaders such as Charles Simeon and Edward Irving began promoting the idea that the Jewish return to their homeland was both a biblical mandate and a precursor to the end times.[27]

Critique: Early Christian Zionist thought relied on selective readings of scripture that ignored its broader ethical teachings. For example, while proponents emphasized passages like Ezekiel 37 (the vision of dry bones) to justify Jewish restoration, they often neglected the prophetic calls for justice, mercy, and reconciliation that permeate the Old Testament.[28]

Political Zionism, Christian Zionism and the Balfour Declaration

In the late 19th century, Christian Zionism converged with political Zionism, a secular movement advocating for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Figures such as William Blackstone, an American evangelist, played a pivotal role in bridging theological and political Zionism. Blackstone's 1891 petition, known as the "Blackstone Memorial," called on world leaders to support the restoration of Jewish people to Palestine, citing biblical prophecy as justification. His petition gained the endorsement of prominent political figures, including U.S. President Benjamin Harrison.[29]

In Britain, Lord Shaftesbury, a prominent evangelical politician, became a leading advocate for Jewish restoration. Shaftesbury's efforts were motivated by his belief in the prophetic significance of the Jewish return to Palestine, which he saw as a necessary step toward the fulfillment of biblical eschatology. His lobbying influenced British policy, laying the groundwork for the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which expressed British support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.[30]

The Balfour Declaration marked a turning point in the history of Christian Zionism, as it formalized British support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Christian Zionist lobbying played a significant role in shaping the declaration, with figures like Lord Shaftesbury and William Blackstone advocating

---

[27] Weber, T.P. *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*. Baker Academic, 2004.
[28] Wright, N.T. *Scripture and the Authority of God*. SPCK Publishing, 2011.
[29] Merkley, P. *Christian Attitudes Towards the State of Israel*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.
[30] Lewis, D. *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

for its theological and political necessity. The declaration was celebrated by Christian Zionists as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, particularly passages like Genesis 15:18–21 and Isaiah 66:8 ("Can a nation be born in a day?").

However, the Balfour Declaration also had profound geopolitical consequences, as it ignored the rights and aspirations of the indigenous Palestinian population. The declaration's failure to address Palestinian concerns laid the groundwork for decades of conflict and displacement, a reality often overlooked by Christian Zionists in their eschatological enthusiasm.[31]

Post-1948 Christian Zionism: Theology Becomes Activism

By the late 20th century, dispensationalism morphed into a political force through Christian Zionism, blending theology with activism. Israel's 1948 establishment was hailed as fulfilling Amos 9:14-15, galvanizing evangelicals amid Cold War anxieties. The 1967 Six-Day War, capturing Jerusalem, was seen as Zechariah 12's realization, prompting figures like Billy Graham to endorse Israel's "biblical rights".[32]

Organizations formalized this: Christians United for Israel (CUFI), founded by John Hagee in 2006, now boasts 10 million members and lobbies for pro-Israel policies, including settlement support and opposition to Iran deals. CUFI's annual Washington summits feature politicians, raising millions for Israeli causes. Hagee, author of *Jerusalem Countdown*, frames conflicts like Gaza operations as prophetic battles against "Islamic threats".[33]

As of 2025, amid Gaza's crisis, CUFI advocates for unrestricted U.S. arms to Israel, securing $18 billion annually despite ICJ genocide rulings.[34] Globally, Christian Zionism spreads: in Latin America, Brazilian evangelicals under President Bolsonaro (2019–2023) moved their embassy to Jerusalem; in Europe, groups like the

---

[31] Kattan, V. *The Palestine Question in International Law*. British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 2009.
[32] Wacker, Grant, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation*. Belknap Press, 2014.
[33] Hagee, J. *Earth's Last Empire*. Worthy Books, 2018.
[34] Human Rights Watch. World Report 2025: Israel and Palestine. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/israel-and-palestine

European Coalition for Israel lobby EU policies.[35] African and Asian branches, like Nigeria's Zionist movements, blend dispensationalism with local prosperity gospels.

Politically, this manifests in opposition to peace processes: evangelicals lobbied against the Oslo Accords (1990s), viewing two-state solutions as thwarting prophecy. In 2025, amid Gaza's famine affecting 1 million, Hagee-linked groups frame Hamas as "Amalek" (1 Samuel 15), justifying blockades.[36]

2.5 Evangelical Literalism: A Fundamentalist Innovation

Evangelical literalism emerged as a theological innovation within Protestant Christianity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rooted in the fundamentalist movement, it sought to defend the authority of scripture against modernist critiques, emphasizing a rigid, literal interpretation of the Bible. While proponents of evangelical literalism claimed to uphold the integrity of scripture, their approach diverged from historical Christian hermeneutics, which embraced the Bible's literary diversity and theological depth. This subsection explores the rise of evangelical literalism, its doctrinal foundations, and its implications for theology and ethics, while critiquing its departure from mainstream Christian traditions.

Protestant Roots of Biblical Literalism

The roots of evangelical literalism can be traced to the Protestant Reformation, particularly the principle of sola scriptura (scripture alone). Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized the authority of scripture over church tradition, laying the groundwork for a focus on biblical text. However, the Reformers approached scripture with an awareness of its literary complexity, recognizing the symbolic and metaphorical nature of many passages. For example, Calvin's commentaries often acknowledged the poetic and figurative language in the Psalms and prophetic books.[37]

Evangelical literalism, however, took this emphasis on scripture to an extreme. Emerging in the late 19th century, it sought to defend the Bible against the

---

[35] Spectator. *The Global Spread of Christian Zionism*, 2025. https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-global-spread-of-christian-zionism

[36] The Lancet. *Gaza and the Collapse of Public Health: A Call for Action*, 2025. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01690-3/fulltext?rss=yes

[37] McGrath, A.E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.

challenges posed by higher criticism and evolutionary theory. Literalists rejected any interpretation of scripture that allowed for metaphor, allegory, or historical context, insisting on a plain, straightforward reading of the text. This approach was particularly applied to prophetic literature, leading to rigid eschatological frameworks such as dispensationalism.[38]

Rise of Fundamentalism

Evangelical literalism became closely associated with the fundamentalist movement, which emerged in the United States during the early 20th century as a response to modernist theology and secularism. The publication of The Fundamentals (1910–1915), a series of essays defending conservative Christian doctrines, marked the beginning of this movement. Among its key tenets was the doctrine of biblical inerrancy—the belief that the Bible is free from error in all matters, including history, science, and theology.[39]

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) formalized this doctrine, asserting that scripture must be interpreted literally wherever possible. This statement became a cornerstone of evangelical theology, shaping the hermeneutical approach of seminaries, churches, and organizations across the United States. Literalism was particularly applied to prophetic texts, with passages like Daniel 9:24–27 and Revelation 20 interpreted as precise predictions of future events.[40]

Literalism and Prophetic Texts

Evangelical literalism's most significant impact was on the interpretation of prophetic texts, particularly those in Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation. Literalists treated these texts as predictive blueprints for future events, often tying them to geopolitical developments in the modern world. For example, dispensationalist theologians interpreted Revelation 20's "millennium" as a literal thousand-year reign of Christ, while Daniel's "seventy weeks" were seen as a precise timeline for the end times (Weber, 2004).

This literalist approach led to the creation of eschatological systems such as pretribulation rapture theology, which gained widespread popularity among

---

[38] Marsden, G.M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture (2nd ed.).* Oxford University Press, 2006.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Geisler, N.L. *Inerrancy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980.

evangelicals. Figures like Hal Lindsey, author of The Late Great Planet Earth (1970), used literalist interpretations to predict imminent apocalyptic events, framing geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East as signs of Christ's return (Lindsey, 1970).

Evangelical literalism's eschatological focus has had profound geopolitical implications, particularly regarding support for the modern state of Israel. Literalists interpret passages like Genesis 12:3 ("I will bless those who bless you") and Ezekiel 36–37 as mandates for Christians to unconditionally support Israel, viewing its establishment as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. This theology has shaped U.S. foreign policy, with evangelical leaders lobbying for pro-Israel policies and opposing Palestinian claims to land and sovereignty.[41]

Growth through Bible Colleges and Seminaries

The institutionalization of evangelical literalism and dispensationalism was significantly advanced by the establishment of Bible colleges and seminaries. Institutions such as Moody Bible Institute (founded 1886), Dallas Theological Seminary (founded 1924), and Talbot School of Theology became centers for training pastors and lay leaders in literalist and dispensationalist hermeneutics.[42,43] These schools produced influential theologians, authors, and preachers who disseminated their teachings across denominations.

The curricula of these institutions emphasized the inerrancy of scripture, premillennial eschatology, and the importance of a literal fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Graduates often became leaders in churches, parachurch organizations, and missionary movements, further spreading these ideas.

Denominational and Organizational Adoption

Throughout the twentieth century, major evangelical denominations—including the Southern Baptist Convention, Assemblies of God, and various independent Baptist and Pentecostal groups—adopted literalist and

---

[41] Spector, Stephen. *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

[42] Carpenter, J.A. *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

[43] Mangum, R. & Sweetnam, M. *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church.* Biblica, 2009.

dispensationalist teachings as part of their doctrinal statements.[44] The rise of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942 provided a platform for cooperation among conservative Protestants, reinforcing these theological commitments.

Parachurch organizations such as Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru), and Focus on the Family further institutionalized evangelical beliefs and values, using mass media, conferences, and publications to reach millions.[45]

Media, Publishing, and Popular Culture

The twentieth century saw an explosion of evangelical media. Radio programs like Back to the Bible and The Lutheran Hour, as well as television ministries led by figures such as Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell, made evangelical literalism accessible to a broad audience.[46]

Books such as Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth (1970) and Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' Left Behind series (1995–2007) popularized dispensationalist prophecy interpretation and Christian Zionism, selling millions of copies and shaping public perceptions of the end times.[47]

Christian publishing houses (e.g., Zondervan, Tyndale House) and bookstores played a critical role in distributing these materials, further embedding literalist theology in evangelical culture.

Political Engagement and the Rise of the Religious Right

Evangelical literalism and Christian Zionism became increasingly intertwined with political activism in the latter half of the twentieth century. The founding of the Moral Majority in 1979 by Jerry Falwell, the Christian Coalition by Pat Roberston in 1989, and the emergence of the Religious Right marked a new era in which theological convictions shaped lobbying, voting, and foreign policy, especially concerning support for Israel.[48]

---

[44] Marsden, G.M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture (2nd ed.).* Oxford University Press, 2006.
[45] Carpenter, 1997.
[46] Ariel, Y.S. *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*. NYU Press, 2013.
[47] Mangum, R. & Sweetnam, M. *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church.* Biblica, 2009.
[48] Brodie, Ian. *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada*. Stanford University Press, 2011.

During Reagan's presidency (1981–1989), Interior Secretary James Watt cited end-times views to downplay environmentalism, while Reagan himself referenced Armageddon in speeches, influenced by Lindsey.[49] The Bush administrations continued this: George W. Bush's faith-based initiatives included Zionist advisors, and his 2003 Iraq invasion was seen by some as clearing prophetic paths. Under Trump (2017–2021), evangelical influence peaked with Mike Pence and Mike Pompeo, who invoked prophecy for the 2018 embassy move to Jerusalem and Golan Heights recognition, citing Genesis 12.[50]

Organizations such as Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and International Christian Embassy Jerusalem institutionalized evangelical support for Israel, organizing conferences, lobbying efforts, and educational campaigns. Evangelical leaders became influential voices in shaping U.S. policy toward the Middle East, often citing biblical promises and prophecies as justification.[51]

Global Spread through Missions and Networks

Evangelical literalism and dispensationalism expanded globally through missionary activity and transnational networks. Missionaries trained in American seminaries brought these theological frameworks to Africa, Asia, Latin America, and beyond, where they were often adopted and adapted by local churches.[52] International conferences, satellite broadcasting, and internet ministries accelerated this spread in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

2.6 Critiques and Counter-Movements

While proponents of evangelical literalism claimed to uphold the integrity of scripture, their approach diverged from historical Christian hermeneutics, which embraced the Bible's literary diversity and theological depth. As evangelical literalism and Christian Zionism became increasingly influential in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a diverse and robust array of critiques and counter-movements emerged. These responses originated both within the evangelical community and from external observers—spanning theologians, ethicists, political analysts, interfaith leaders, and grassroots organizations. They have challenged the

[49] FitzGerald, F. *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*. Simon & Schuster, 2017.
[50] Pompeo, M. *Never Give an Inch*. Broadside Books, 2023.
[51] Ariel, Y.S. *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*. NYU Press, 2013.
[52] Ibid.

theological foundations, ethical implications, and political outcomes of literalist readings of scripture and the alignment of Christian faith with specific geopolitical agendas. This section explores the main lines of critique and the development of alternative approaches, highlighting the ongoing debates that continue to shape Christian engagement with scripture, Israel, and the broader Middle East.

Theological Critiques

One of the most persistent critiques of evangelical literalism focuses on its approach to biblical interpretation (hermeneutics). Scholars argue that:

- **Genre and Context:** Literalist readings often fail to account for the literary genres, historical contexts, and original audiences of biblical texts. Apocalyptic literature, such as Daniel and Revelation, is rich in symbolism and metaphor, and was never intended to serve as a straightforward blueprint for predicting modern political events.[53]
- **Selective Application:** Literalists may apply a literal reading to prophetic passages about Israel while interpreting other scriptures more figuratively or selectively, resulting in inconsistent hermeneutics.[54]
- **Simplistic Hermeneutic:** While sola scriptura emphasized scripture's authority, evangelical literalism introduced an overly simplistic hermeneutic that ignored the Bible's literary diversity. For example, apocalyptic texts like Revelation were read as literal predictions of future events rather than symbolic depictions of divine sovereignty. This reductionist approach diverged from historical Christian traditions, which valued the theological and symbolic richness of scripture.[55]
- **Biblical Inerrancy:** The fundamentalist insistence on biblical inerrancy imposed rigid interpretations on scripture, failing to account for its historical and cultural contexts. For example, the creation accounts in Genesis were read as scientific descriptions of the earth's origins, ignoring their theological and literary dimensions. This approach not only distorted the Bible's message but also alienated Christianity from contemporary scientific and historical scholarship.[56]

---

[53] Holwerda, D.E. *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* Eerdmans, 1995.
[54] Sizer, Stephen. *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* InterVarsity Press, 2004.
[55] Wright, N.T. *Scripture and the Authority of God*. SPCK Publishing, 2011.
[56] McGrath, A.E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.

- **Dispensationalism's Rigid Epochs:** Dispensationalist frameworks, which divide history into distinct eras or "dispensations," can fragment the unity of scripture and sometimes obscure the continuity of God's redemptive purposes across the Old and New Testaments.[57]

Ethical and Political Critiques: Impact on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

A significant area of critique concerns the ethical consequences of Christian Zionism's political activism, particularly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

- **Marginalization of Palestinians:** Unconditional support for Israeli government policies often overlooks or exacerbates the suffering of Palestinian Christians and Muslims. Critics argue that such stances ignore biblical calls for justice, peace, and care for the marginalized.[58]
- **Peace and Justice:** Mainline Protestant churches and ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches have called for a more balanced approach, advocating for the rights of both Israelis and Palestinians and supporting international efforts toward a just peace.[59]
- **Instrumentalization of Israel:** Some Jewish and Christian critics argue that evangelical support for Israel is often based less on genuine solidarity and more on eschatological expectations about the end times, where Israel serves as a stage for apocalyptic fulfillment rather than as a partner in dialogue.[60]
- **Policy Distortion:** Theological convictions can sometimes distort foreign policy, encouraging actions that escalate conflict or marginalize diplomatic solutions. Analysts warn that such approaches risk reducing complex realities to simplistic narratives and may undermine the prospects for lasting peace.[61]

---

[57] Lewis, D.M. *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
[58] Holwerda, D.E. *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* Eerdmans, 1995.
[59] Ariel, Y.S. *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews.* NYU Press, 2013.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Brodie, Ian. *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada*. Stanford University Press, 2011.

Counter-Movements within Christianity

Mainline Protestant denominations and ecumenical organizations have been at the forefront of countering Christian Zionist influence:

- **Statements and Resolutions:** Bodies such as the United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), and the World Council of Churches have issued statements critiquing Christian Zionism and calling for justice, reconciliation, and respect for international law in the Holy Land.[62]
- **Support for Palestinian Christians:** These groups work closely with Palestinian Christian communities, highlighting their experiences and advocating for their rights on the global stage.

Within evangelicalism, alternative voices have emerged:

- **Evangelicals for Social Action:** This group and others, such as 'Christ at the Checkpoint', promote a theology of peace, justice, and reconciliation, challenging the dominance of dispensationalist and Zionist readings.[63]
- **Re-examining Prophecy:** Evangelical scholars and pastors have published works and organized conferences to encourage more nuanced interpretations of biblical prophecy and to address the ethical implications of Christian political engagement.[64]

In summary, the rise of evangelical literalism and Christian Zionism has provoked substantial critique and inspired a wide range of counter-movements. These responses have enriched the theological, ethical, and political discourse within Christianity and beyond, emphasizing the need for responsible biblical interpretation, a commitment to justice and reconciliation, and a nuanced engagement with the complex realities of the Middle East. The ongoing debates ensure that the issues at stake remain dynamic, contested, and central to contemporary Christian identity and witness.

---

[62] Sizer, Stephen. *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* InterVarsity Press, 2004.
[63] Ariel, Y.S. An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews. NYU Press, 2013.
[64] Lewis, D.M. *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Chapter 3: Critiquing Biblical Authorship, Authenticity, and Reliability – A Comprehensive Deconstruction

As established in Chapters 1 and 2, dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and evangelical literalism hinge on a view of the Bible as an inerrant, divinely dictated text— a literal blueprint for history, prophecy, and geopolitics. This perspective frames modern Israel as the fulfillment of eternal land promises (e.g., Genesis 12) and conflicts like the Gaza war as eschatological necessities. However, such claims crumble under historical-critical scrutiny. The Bible is not a monolithic document but a collection of human writings shaped by diverse authors, editors, and contexts over centuries. This chapter deconstructs its authorship, authenticity, and reliability, revealing inconsistencies, pseudepigraphy, and ethical tensions that undermine literalist interpretations.

Drawing on archaeology, textual criticism, and comparative literature, we argue that recognizing the Bible's human dimensions does not negate its spiritual value but liberates it from ideologies that enable harm, such as the dehumanization in Gaza/OPT (detailed in Chapter 4). We address counterarguments fairly, showing how inerrancy doctrines like the Chicago Statement (1978) fail to withstand evidence. This deconstruction paves the way for ethical alternatives in Chapter 6, emphasizing contextual hermeneutics over rigid literalism.

3.1 The Historical-Critical Method and Challenges to Biblical Inerrancy

The historical-critical method represents a pivotal shift in biblical scholarship, emerging prominently in the Enlightenment era and gaining momentum through the 18th and 19th centuries. Pioneered by figures such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, and most notably Julius Wellhausen, this approach treats the Bible not as a timeless, divinely dictated artifact but as a collection of historical documents shaped by the cultural, social, and political contexts of their composition. At its core, the method employs tools like source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and tradition history to dissect the texts' origins, development, and meanings. Source criticism, for example, identifies underlying documents or traditions woven into the final biblical narratives, while redaction criticism examines how editors adapted these materials for theological purposes.

This methodology directly challenges the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, a cornerstone of fundamentalist and evangelical theology, which asserts that the Bible, in its original manuscripts, is entirely without error in matters of history, science, and doctrine (as articulated in the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy). Inerrantists, such as those from the Evangelical Theological Society,

maintain that any apparent discrepancies are resolvable through harmonization or contextual understanding. However, historical-critical scholars argue that this view overlooks the Bible's human dimensions—its authors were influenced by their environments, and the texts evolved through oral traditions, redactions, and communal use. As Walter Brueggemann notes in The Prophetic Imagination (2018), the Bible is a "human product" that reflects the "ideological struggles" of ancient communities, not a flawless divine download.

A foundational example of this critique is Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis, outlined in his Prolegomena to the History of Israel.[65] Wellhausen proposed that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, traditionally attributed to Moses) was not a unified work but a compilation of four main sources: J (Yahwist, emphasizing narrative and anthropomorphic depictions of God, dated to the 10th century BCE), E (Elohist, focusing on moral and prophetic elements, from the 9th century BCE), D (Deuteronomist, with its legal and covenantal emphases, around the 7th century BCE), and P (Priestly, concerned with rituals and genealogy, post-exilic, 6th–5th centuries BCE). This hypothesis is vividly illustrated in the dual creation accounts of Genesis 1–2. Genesis 1:1–2:3 (attributed to P) describes a majestic, orderly creation over six days, culminating in humanity as the pinnacle of a cosmic design, with God resting on the seventh day. In contrast, Genesis 2:4–25 (J source) presents a more earthy, human-centered story where God forms Adam from dust, plants a garden, and creates Eve from Adam's rib, emphasizing relational dynamics over chronological structure. These accounts differ in sequence (e.g., plants before humans in Genesis 1, humans before plants in Genesis 2), divine names (Elohim vs. Yahweh), and tone, suggesting they were independent traditions later edited together. Such evidence undermines inerrancy by revealing the Pentateuch as a redacted mosaic, not a seamless Mosaic authorship, as claimed in traditions like Deuteronomy 31:9.

Contemporary scholars like Bart D. Ehrman build on this foundation, arguing in works such as *Jesus, Interrupted* that inerrancy fosters dogmatic readings that ignore textual complexities.[66] Ehrman points to the Synoptic Gospels' divergences—such as varying genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3—as products of theological agendas rather than historical precision. Matthew traces Jesus through

---

[65] Wellhausen, J. *Prolegomena to the history of ancient Israel*. Peter Smith Publisher, 1889/1973.

[66] Ehrman, B.D. *Jesus, Interrupted. Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them).* HarperCollins, 2009.

Davidic kings to emphasize messianic kingship, while Luke extends to Adam for universal appeal, reflecting different community needs in the 1st century CE.

In the context of this book, these challenges are particularly relevant to dispensationalism and Christian Zionism, which often rely on inerrantist interpretations to justify literal fulfillments of biblical prophecies, such as the "everlasting" land promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:7 or 15:18. Dispensationalists like John Nelson Darby and modern proponents (e.g., in the Left Behind series) treat these as unconditional divine guarantees, ignoring how historical-critical analysis reveals them as part of J or P sources shaped by ancient Near Eastern covenant traditions and later exilic hopes. This literalism can perpetuate real-world harms, such as unconditional support for Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank, which displaces Palestinian communities and exacerbates conflicts in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). As Gary M. Burge critiques in *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* such views stem from a "hermeneutic of literalism" that bypasses historical context, contributing to ethical blind spots amid ongoing humanitarian crises, including the reported displacement of over 1.9 million people in Gaza since 2023 (per UNRWA 2025 reports).[67]

By introducing the historical-critical method here, this subsection lays the groundwork for the chapter's subsequent explorations. It prepares readers to engage with critiques of authorship and composition (3.2), where we delve into pseudepigraphy and composite texts; authenticity and canon formation (3.3), examining selective inclusion processes; reliability issues like contradictions (3.4); cultural influences from ancient myths (3.5); transmission errors (3.6); translation biases (3.7); failed harmonization in apocalyptic genres (3.8); insights from the Dead Sea Scrolls (3.9); and archaeological contradictions (3.10). Ultimately, these threads converge in section 3.11, highlighting implications for rethinking dispensationalist theologies in favor of justice-oriented readings. This deconstructive approach does not diminish the Bible's spiritual value but invites a more nuanced, ethically responsible engagement, aligning with prophetic calls for justice (e.g., Amos 5:24) over rigid literalism.

---

[67] Burge, G.M. *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians (Revised, Updated).* Pilgrim Press, 2020.

3.2 Authorship and Composition of Biblical Texts

Building on the historical-critical method introduced in the previous section, which reveals the Bible's texts as products of historical evolution rather than singular divine dictation, we now turn to the specifics of authorship and composition. Biblical scholarship has long demonstrated that many books in both the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament are not the work of the individuals traditionally attributed to them. Instead, they often exhibit pseudepigraphy (false attribution to a revered figure for authority), anonymity, or composite authorship, where multiple writers, editors, and traditions contributed over time. This process reflects ancient literary practices, where texts were communal endeavors shaped by oral transmission, redaction, and cultural adaptation. As scholar Raymond E. Brown notes in *An Introduction to the New Testament*, "The Bible is not a book but a library," compiled across centuries with diverse voices.[68] Understanding this challenges inerrantist views that demand unified, error-free authorship, and it undermines literalist interpretations in dispensationalism, which treat prophetic texts as monolithic predictions for modern events like Israel's restoration.

Pseudepigraphy was common in antiquity, serving to honor a tradition or lend credibility, as explored by Bart D. Ehrman in *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics*.[69] In the Old Testament, this is evident in books like Daniel, traditionally ascribed to the 6th-century BCE prophet but dated by scholars to the 2nd century BCE during the Maccabean revolt. The book's bilingual structure (Hebrew and Aramaic) and historical anachronisms—such as references to Greek instruments in Daniel 3:5—suggest it was composed pseudonymously to encourage resistance against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. John J. Collins, in *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, argues that chapters 1–6 are folk tales adapted from earlier traditions, while 7–12 are apocalyptic visions tailored to the Hellenistic crisis.[70] This composite nature means Daniel's "prophecies" (e.g., the "seventy weeks" in 9:24–27) are ex eventu (after the fact), not predictive of end-times Israel, as dispensationalists like Hal Lindsey claim.[71]

---

[68] Brown, R.E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Yale University Press, 1997.
[69] Ehrman, B.D. *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
[70] Collins, J.J. *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel (Hermeneia: a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible).* Fortress Press, 2021.
[71] Lindsey, H. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Zondervan, 1970.

Another prime example is the Book of Isaiah, traditionally attributed to the 8th-century BCE prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem. Historical-critical analysis divides it into three sections: Proto-Isaiah (chapters 1–39), Deutero-Isaiah (40–55), and Trito-Isaiah (56–66). Proto-Isaiah addresses the Assyrian threat, with oracles of judgment and hope (e.g., Isaiah 7:14's "Immanuel" prophecy). Deutero-Isaiah, written during the Babylonian exile (c. 540 BCE), shifts to themes of comfort and return (e.g., Isaiah 40:1–2, "Comfort, comfort my people"), using Cyrus the Persian as God's instrument (Isaiah 45:1). Trito-Isaiah, post-exilic (5th century BCE), focuses on community restoration amid Persian rule (e.g., Isaiah 61's anointing for the poor). Joseph Blenkinsopp's *Isaiah 1–39*[72] and *Isaiah 40–55*[73] highlight linguistic shifts—e.g., Deutero-Isaiah's elevated poetry versus Proto-Isaiah's confrontational style—and historical references, confirming multiple authors. This fragmentation challenges Christian Zionist readings of Isaiah 11:11–12 as a literal "second gathering" of Jews, ignoring the exilic context and composite editing.

In the Pentateuch, composition extends the Documentary Hypothesis discussed in 3.1. Beyond creation accounts, the patriarchal narratives in Genesis illustrate layering: Abraham's covenant in Genesis 15 (J source, dramatic and covenantal) contrasts with Genesis 17 (P source, ritualistic with circumcision). Exodus's plague narratives blend sources—J's miraculous signs versus P's structured confrontations with Pharaoh—resulting in inconsistencies like the number of plagues or God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 7:3 vs. 8:15). As Joel S. Baden details in *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis,* these reflect theological agendas: J emphasizes Yahweh's relational power, while P prioritizes priestly order.[74] Such composition questions traditional Mosaic authorship (Exodus 24:4), portraying the Torah as a post-exilic compilation, possibly under Ezra (c. 458 BCE), as per Nehemiah 8.

Turning to the New Testament, authorship debates are equally revealing. The Gospels are anonymous, with attributions (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) added in the 2nd century CE for apostolic legitimacy. Mark, the earliest (c. 70 CE), is attributed to John Mark, a companion of Peter, but its abrupt ending (16:8 in original manuscripts) and lack of post-resurrection appearances suggest community

---

[72] Blenkinsopp, J. *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible).* Bantam, 2000.
[73] Blenkinsopp, J. *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible).* Yale University Press, 2002.
[74] Baden, J.S. *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis.* Yale University Press, 2012.

composition amid the Jewish-Roman War. Matthew and Luke, drawing from Mark and Q (a hypothetical sayings source), adapt for their audiences: Matthew for Jewish Christians, emphasizing fulfillment of prophecy (e.g., Matthew 2's flight to Egypt echoing Hosea 11:1), while Luke targets Gentiles with universal themes (e.g., Luke 4:18–19's social gospel). John's Gospel, dated to c. 90–100 CE, differs stylistically, with philosophical discourses (e.g., John 1's Logos) absent in the Synoptics. As Elaine Pagels explores in *The Gnostic Gospels*, these compositions reflect theological diversity, not eyewitness uniformity, challenging inerrantist claims of harmonious testimony.[75]

The Pauline corpus provides stark cases of disputed authorship. Of the 13 epistles attributed to Paul, scholars widely accept seven as authentic: Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon, based on style, vocabulary, and theology (e.g., Paul's emphasis on justification by faith in Galatians 2:16). However, the Pastorals (1–2 Timothy, Titus) are deemed pseudepigraphic, likely 2nd-century writings addressing church hierarchy (e.g., 1 Timothy 3's qualifications for bishops, anachronistic for Paul's era). Differences include domesticated language (e.g., "sound doctrine" vs. Paul's dynamic rhetoric) and views on women (1 Timothy 2:12's silence mandate vs. Galatians 3:28's equality). Ephesians and Colossians show similar shifts, with Ephesians's cosmic Christology (e.g., 1:20–23) expanding Paul's ideas. As F.C. Baur argued in Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ (1845, English 1873–75), these reflect post-Pauline developments. Ehrman's *Forged* posits they were written to combat heresies like Gnosticism, using Paul's name for authority.[76]

Even within authentic letters, composition involves collaboration: 1 Corinthians credits Sosthenes (1:1), and many include scribal notes (e.g., Romans 16:22, Tertius). This communal aspect, as Wayne A. Meeks discusses in *The First Urban Christians*, shows early Christianity as a network, not solitary genius.[77]

These insights into authorship and composition have profound implications for dispensationalism and Christian Zionism, which often hinge on literal readings of "prophetic" texts. For instance, dispensationalists interpret Romans 11's "all Israel will be saved" as a future mass conversion, but viewing Romans as authentically

---

[75] Pagels, E. *The Gnostic Gospels*. Vintage Books, 1979.
[76] Ehrman, B. D. *Forged: Writing in the Name of God-Why the Bible's Authors are not Who We Think.* HarperCollins, 2011.
[77] Meeks, W.A. *The First Urban Christians: the Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd edition. Yale University Press, 2003.

Pauline reveals it as a 1st-century reflection on Jewish-Gentile relations, not an end-times blueprint. Composite texts like Isaiah undermine claims of unbroken prophecy for modern Israel, as Burge critiques in *Jesus and the Land*, arguing that such views ignore New Testament reinterpretations (e.g., Hebrews 11:16's heavenly homeland).[78] Ethically, this literalism can justify inaction amid Gaza's crises, where over 1.7 million remain displaced (OCHA OPT Humanitarian Snapshot, 2025), prioritizing "biblical" geopolitics over justice (Micah 6:8).

3.3 Authenticity and Canon Formation

Continuing from the examination of authorship and composition in the previous subsection, which highlighted the Bible's texts as layered, human endeavors often involving pseudepigraphy and communal editing, we now explore the processes of authenticity assessment and canon formation. The biblical canon—the collection of books deemed authoritative and inspired—did not emerge fully formed or divinely ordained but resulted from protracted debates, theological controversies, and socio-political influences over centuries. Authenticity here refers to the criteria used by early communities to evaluate texts: apostolic origin, doctrinal orthodoxy, widespread usage, and alignment with emerging creeds. As scholar Lee Martin McDonald notes in *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (2007), canon formation was "a human process guided by the Spirit but marked by disagreement and revision."[79] This historical reality poses significant challenges to biblical inerrancy, which assumes a seamless, error-free transmission of God's word. Moreover, it undermines dispensationalist and Christian Zionist frameworks that treat the canon as a fixed prophetic roadmap, interpreting texts like those on Israel's restoration (e.g., Ezekiel 37) as literal mandates for modern geopolitics, often overlooking how canon selections reflected anti-Jewish biases or imperial agendas.

The formation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) canon illustrates this gradual, contested process. Unlike a single council dictating inclusion, the canon evolved through stages, influenced by Jewish sects and historical crises. By the 2nd century BCE, the Torah (Pentateuch) was largely fixed, as evidenced by the Dead

---

[78] Burge, G.M. *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to 'Holy Land' Theology*. Baker Academic, 2010.

[79] McDonald, L.M. *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority*, 3rd edition. Baker Academic, 2007.

Sea Scrolls (discussed further in 3.9), which include multiple copies of books like Isaiah and Deuteronomy. The Prophets (Nevi'im) gained authority by the 1st century BCE, per the prologue to Sirach (c. 132 BCE), which references "the Law and the Prophets and the other books." However, the Writings (Ketuvim) remained fluid; debates persisted into the 1st century CE, with some rabbis questioning books like Esther (lacking God's name) and Song of Songs (its erotic content). The so-called Council of Jamnia (c. 90 CE), often mythologized as a definitive assembly, was more a series of discussions amid the Jewish-Roman Wars, as described by Heinrich Graetz in History of the Jews (1891–98). It aimed to standardize texts post-Temple destruction, excluding works like the Wisdom of Solomon and Tobit, which were part of the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation used by Hellenistic Jews and early Christians.

Protestant canons exclude these deuterocanonical books (Apocrypha), following Martin Luther's lead in the 16th century, who deemed them non-inspired due to their absence from the Hebrew canon and perceived doctrinal issues (e.g., 2 Maccabees 12:43–46 supporting prayers for the dead, conflicting with sola fide). Catholic and Orthodox traditions retain them, as affirmed by the Council of Trent (1546). This variability highlights authenticity as subjective: Jerome, in his Prologus Galeatus (c. 391 CE), advocated for the Hebrew canon, while Augustine, in On Christian Doctrine (397 CE), included the Apocrypha based on church usage. Such discrepancies challenge inerrantist claims of an unchanging canon, as Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix argue in *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible*, yet their defenses often downplay historical debates.[80] For dispensationalists, excluding Apocrypha reinforces literal readings of prophetic books, but texts like 1 Maccabees provide context for Hanukkah and resistance narratives, complicating Zionist views of unbroken Jewish sovereignty.

The New Testament canon's formation was even more protracted and contentious, spanning the 2nd to 4th centuries CE amid heresies, persecutions, and ecclesiastical consolidation. Early Christians circulated diverse writings—gospels, epistles, apocalypses—without a fixed list. The Muratorian Fragment (c. 170–200 CE), the earliest known canon list, includes the four Gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline epistles, and Revelation but omits Hebrews, James, and 1–2 Peter, while rejecting the Shepherd of Hermas as too recent. Eusebius of Caesarea, in Ecclesiastical History (c. 324 CE, Book 3.25), categorized texts into accepted (homologoumena,

[80] Geisler, N. & W.E. Nix. *From God to Us Revised and Expanded: How We Got Our Bible*. Moody Publishers. 2012.

e.g., the Gospels), disputed (antilegomena, e.g., Revelation due to its apocalyptic fervor), and spurious (notha, e.g., Gospel of the Hebrews). Athanasius's 39th Festal Letter (367 CE) first lists the 27 books of the modern NT canon, emphasizing orthodoxy against Arianism and Gnosticism. However, regional variations persisted: the Syriac Peshitta initially excluded 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude, and Revelation, while Codex Sinaiticus (4th century) includes extracanonical works like the Epistle of Barnabas.

Authenticity criteria evolved dynamically. Apostolicity was key—texts needed ties to apostles or their associates—but this was often retroactively applied, as with the pseudepigraphic works discussed in 3.2 (e.g., 2 Peter). Orthodoxy ensured alignment with the "rule of faith," excluding Gnostic texts like the Gospel of Thomas (c. 140 CE), which contains sayings of Jesus but emphasizes esoteric knowledge over crucifixion (Thomas 55). As Elaine Pagels details in The Gnostic Gospels (1979), these exclusions stemmed from power struggles; Irenaeus, in Against Heresies (c. 180 CE), championed the four Gospels to counter Marcion's canon, which rejected the Old Testament and favored an edited Luke and Pauline letters to excise Jewish elements. Catholicity (widespread use) and inspiration (edifying content) rounded out the criteria, per Bruce M. Metzger's *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*.[81]

Examples abound of contested authenticity. Revelation's inclusion was debated due to its millenarianism; Luther called it "neither apostolic nor prophetic" in his 1522 Bible preface, reflecting ongoing unease. Hebrews, anonymous and stylistically unlike Paul, was accepted in the East but questioned in the West until the 4th century, as its temple imagery (Hebrews 9) appealed to anti-Jewish supersessionism. The Gospel of Peter, an apocryphal text from the 2nd century, was briefly used in some communities but rejected for docetic tendencies (denying Jesus's full humanity), as discovered in the *Akhmim Fragment*.[82] Harry Y. Gamble, in *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*, argues these decisions were influenced by Roman imperial pressures post-Constantine (Edict of Milan, 313 CE), favoring unified doctrine.[83]

---

[81] Metzger, B.M. *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Clarendon Press, 1987/1997.
[82] Swete, H.B. (Ed.) *The Akhmim Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter*. Kessinger Publishing, 1886/2006.
[83] Gamble, H.Y. *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*. Wipf and Stock, 2002.

These processes reveal the canon's human imprint, challenging inerrancy by showing how authenticity was negotiated, not inherent. Disputed books like Jude, which quotes the non-canonical Enoch (Jude 1:14–15), introduce "errors" if inerrancy demands purity.

3.4 Reliability, Contradictions, and Errors

Following the discussions on authorship, composition (3.2), and canon formation (3.3), which revealed the Bible as a collection of humanly authored, edited, and selectively compiled texts shaped by historical and theological contingencies, this subsection addresses the issues of reliability, internal contradictions, and outright errors within the biblical corpus. Biblical inerrancy posits that the Scriptures, in their original autographs, are without error in all matters—historical, scientific, doctrinal, and moral—a view articulated in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) by evangelicals like Norman Geisler. However, textual criticism, archaeology, and comparative analysis expose numerous inconsistencies, factual inaccuracies, and contradictions that arise from the texts' composite nature, oral transmission, and cultural contexts. As Bart D. Ehrman argues in *Misquoting Jesus*, these issues stem not from deliberate deception but from the inevitable flaws in human copying and redaction processes.[84] Such revelations profoundly undermine dispensationalist and Christian Zionist hermeneutics, which rely on literal, harmonious readings of prophecies (e.g., Ezekiel's temple vision in chapters 40–48 as a blueprint for a future millennial kingdom), often ignoring how contradictions reflect diverse traditions rather than a unified divine plan. Recognizing these elements encourages a contextual, ethical approach to scripture, prioritizing justice in regions like the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) over rigid literalism.

Internal Contradictions: Theological and Narrative Inconsistencies

One of the most evident challenges to reliability is the presence of internal contradictions, where parallel accounts or teachings within the Bible conflict in details, theology, or chronology. These often result from the merging of disparate sources, as seen in the Documentary Hypothesis for the Pentateuch.

---

[84] Ehrman, B. D. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why.* HarperOne, 2005.

In the Hebrew Bible, the creation narratives in Genesis provide a classic example. Genesis 1:1–2:3 (Priestly source) depicts a structured, seven-day creation where humans are made last (1:26–27, male and female simultaneously) and God rests on the seventh day. In contrast, Genesis 2:4–25 (Yahwist source) presents a more anthropomorphic account: God forms man from dust first (2:7), then plants a garden, creates animals, and finally woman from man's rib (2:21–22). The sequence differs—animals after man in chapter 2 versus before in chapter 1—and the divine name shifts from Elohim (generic) to Yahweh (personal). Richard Elliott Friedman, in *Who Wrote the Bible?* attributes these to distinct traditions: the Priestly version emphasizes order and Sabbath, while the Yahwist focuses on human centrality.[85] Inerrantists like Gleason Archer in *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* attempt harmonization (e.g., claiming chapter 2 is a "detailed expansion"), but this strains the text, ignoring redactional seams.[86]

Another Old Testament case is the flood narrative in Genesis 6–9, a composite of J and P sources. J describes Noah taking seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean (Genesis 7:2–3), with the flood lasting 40 days (7:17), while P specifies one pair of each (6:19–20) and a 150-day duration (7:24). Contradictions extend to the flood's end: birds are sent three times in J (8:6–12) versus a different timeline in P. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, in *The Bible Unearthed*, link these to Mesopotamian influences (e.g., the Epic of Gilgamesh), suggesting the story evolved from oral flood myths, not historical reportage.[87] Such inconsistencies challenge literalist views, including dispensationalist interpretations of Genesis 9:1–7's post-flood covenant as establishing unchanging "dispensations."

Historical contradictions abound, such as in the conquest narratives. Joshua 6–12 portrays a swift, total conquest of Canaan (e.g., Jericho's walls falling in 6:20), but Judges 1 describes incomplete victories, with tribes failing to drive out inhabitants (e.g., Judah unable to conquer the plains in 1:19). Archaeological evidence, as summarized by William G. Dever *in What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It*?, shows no widespread destruction layers c. 1200 BCE,

---

[85] Friedman, R.E. *Who Wrote the Bible?* HarperOne, 1987.

[86] Archer, G.L. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, Based on the NIV and the NASB*. Zondervan, 1982.

[87] Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. Free Press, 2001.

suggesting these accounts are ideological exaggerations from the monarchic period to legitimize Davidic rule.[88]

In the New Testament, Gospel contradictions are particularly stark, reflecting independent traditions rather than eyewitness harmony. The resurrection accounts diverge significantly: Mark 16:1–8 (original ending) has women finding an empty tomb and fleeing in fear, with no appearances; Matthew 28 adds an earthquake, guards, and Jesus appearing to the women and disciples in Galilee; Luke 24 emphasizes Jerusalem appearances and the ascension; John 20–21 includes unique episodes like Thomas doubting and a seaside breakfast in Galilee. Details conflict—e.g., the number of angels (one in Mark/Matthew, two in Luke/John) and the women's actions (they report in Matthew/Luke/John but not in Mark). Ehrman, in *Jesus, Interrupted*, argues these stem from oral variants, not collusion, undermining inerrantist claims of inerrancy.[89]

Genealogies of Jesus also contradict: Matthew 1:1–17 traces through David via Solomon, listing 28 generations from David to Jesus, while Luke 3:23–38 goes via Nathan, with 43 generations and different names post-David (e.g., Matthew's Jeconiah vs. Luke's Neri). Attempts at reconciliation (e.g., Matthew as Joseph's legal line, Luke as Mary's) are speculative, as the texts claim Joseph's ancestry.

Theological tensions appear in epistles. James 2:24 ("a person is justified by works and not by faith alone") seems to counter Paul's Romans 3:28 ("justified by faith apart from works of the law"), reflecting debates in early Christianity. Inerrantists like John MacArthur in *Faith Works* harmonize by distinguishing "types" of works, but this overlooks historical context—James addressing antinomianism, Paul legalism.[90]

Factual Errors and Scientific Inaccuracies

Beyond contradictions, the Bible contains factual errors arising from ancient worldviews, not modern science or historiography. Genesis 1's firmament (1:6–8) reflects a pre-scientific cosmology with a solid dome holding back cosmic waters, akin to Babylonian myths, as John H. Walton explains in The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate (2009). Leviticus 11:13–19

---

[88] Dever, W. G. *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.
[89] Ehrman, B.D. *Jesus, Interrupted. Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them).* HarperCollins, 2009.
[90] MacArthur, J.F. *Faith Works*. Thomas Nelson Inc., 1993.

classifies bats as birds, and 11:6 claims hares chew cud—zoological errors from observational limits.

Historical inaccuracies include the census in 2 Samuel 24:1 (God incites David) versus 1 Chronicles 21:1 (Satan does), a post-exilic theological shift. The New Testament's Quirinius census in Luke 2:1–2 is anachronistic; Quirinius governed Syria in 6 CE, post-Herod's death (4 BCE), as Josephus records in Antiquities of the Jews (18.1.1). Matthew 2's magi and flight to Egypt lack corroboration, potentially legendary.

Transmission errors compound reliability issues. Manuscript variants, like the Comma Johanneum in 1 John 5:7–8 (a Trinitarian insertion absent in early texts), show doctrinal interpolations, per Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament*.[91]

Implications for Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism

These contradictions and errors erode the foundation of dispensationalism, which demands literal fulfillment of prophecies like Daniel 9:24–27's "seventy weeks" as precise timelines for Israel's restoration. If Daniel contains ex eventu prophecies and internal inconsistencies (e.g., varying kingdom sequences in chapters 2 and 7), its reliability as a modern blueprint falters, as John J. Collins critiques in *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*.[92] Christian Zionists, such as in Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, cite harmonious scriptures for end-times Israel, but ignoring contradictions risks ethical lapses, like supporting policies contrary to biblical calls for justice (Isaiah 1:17).

3.5 Influence of Ancient Myths and Near Eastern Traditions

Building on the examination of reliability, contradictions, and errors in Subsection 3.4, which highlighted the Bible's internal inconsistencies as products of human composition and cultural contexts, this subsection delves into the profound influence of ancient myths and Near Eastern traditions on biblical texts. Far from being isolated divine revelations, the Scriptures reflect a dynamic interplay with the mythologies, legal codes, literary motifs, and theological ideas of neighboring civilizations, including Mesopotamia, Egypt, Canaan (Ugarit), and later Hellenistic

---

[91] Metzger, B.M., & Ehrman, B.D. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press, 2005.
[92] Collins, J.J. *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Rutledge, 1997.

cultures. As scholar Mark S. Smith argues in *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, Israelite religion evolved through assimilation and adaptation of Canaanite elements, transforming polytheistic motifs into monotheistic frameworks.[93] This borrowing challenges biblical inerrancy by demonstrating that many narratives and doctrines are not original or error-free divine dictations but human reinterpretations shaped by historical interactions, such as the Babylonian Exile (586–539 BCE). For dispensationalists and Christian Zionists, who interpret texts like Genesis 12:1–3's Abrahamic covenant as a unique, literal promise of Israel's eternal land rights, acknowledging these influences reveals such passages as part of broader ancient Near Eastern (ANE) covenant traditions, potentially undermining claims of exceptionalism and encouraging ethical reconsiderations of modern territorial disputes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

Creation Narratives and Cosmological Motifs

The Genesis creation accounts exhibit clear parallels with Mesopotamian and Canaanite myths, suggesting Israelite authors adapted existing stories to affirm Yahweh's supremacy. Genesis 1:1–2:3's structured creation from chaos, with a divine word separating waters and forming light, mirrors the Babylonian Enuma Elish (c. 18th–16th centuries BCE), where Marduk defeats the sea monster Tiamat, splits her body to create heaven and earth, and establishes cosmic order. In both, creation involves subduing watery chaos (Hebrew tehom akin to Tiamat), but Genesis demythologizes this by portraying Yahweh as unchallenged, without combat. John H. Walton, in *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, notes that Genesis emphasizes functional creation (assigning roles) over material origins, adapting ANE cosmology to promote Sabbath observance.[94]

Genesis 2–3's Eden narrative draws from motifs like the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh (c. 2100–1200 BCE), where Gilgamesh seeks immortality via a plant at the sea's bottom, echoing the tree of life and serpent (Genesis 3:1–6). The motif of a paradisiacal garden with life-giving trees appears in Sumerian tales, such as Inanna and the Huluppu Tree. Additionally, the expulsion from Eden parallels Egyptian stories of divine gardens, as explored by James K. Hoffmeier in *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*, though he argues for historical

[93] Smith, M.S. *The Early History of God. Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel, 2nd edition*. HarperCollins (2002)

[94] Walton, J.H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*. Baker Academics, 2006.

kernels amid borrowings.[95] These influences indicate Genesis as a polemical response to polytheism, not pristine revelation, challenging inerrantist views that treat it as literal history.

Flood Stories and Cataclysmic Legends

The Noachian flood in Genesis 6–9 closely resembles the Mesopotamian flood myths in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Tablet XI) and the Atrahasis Epic (c. 18th century BCE). In Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim builds an ark on divine instruction, loads animals, endures a six-day storm, sends birds (dove, swallow, raven), and offers a sacrifice post-flood, receiving immortality—parallels to Noah's ark, 40-day rain, birds (raven and dove in Genesis 8:6–12), and altar (8:20). Differences include the biblical monotheistic focus and global scope, but shared details like pitch-sealed vessels and mountaintop landings suggest direct borrowing, likely during the Exile when Israelites encountered Babylonian lore. Irving Finkel, in *The Ark Before Noah*, deciphers cuneiform tablets confirming these connections, arguing the biblical version ethicizes the tale by emphasizing human sin and divine covenant.[96]

Canaanite influences appear in storm god motifs; Yahweh's control of waters echoes Baal's battles in Ugaritic texts (c. 1400 BCE), where Baal defeats Yam (sea) to establish order, per The Baal Cycle (KTU 1.1–1.6). Such adaptations undermine literalist interpretations of the flood as a historical global event, as dispensationalists like Henry M. Morris in *The Genesis Flood* claim, ignoring archaeological absence of worldwide flood layers.[97]

Legal Codes and Ethical Precepts

Biblical law codes, particularly in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, draw heavily from ANE precedents like the Code of Hammurabi (c. 1750 BCE), a Babylonian stele with 282 laws on justice, property, and family. For instance, the lex talionis ("eye for an eye") in Exodus 21:23–25 mirrors Hammurabi's §196–200, though the Bible applies it more equitably across classes, unlike Hammurabi's social stratification. David P. Wright, in Inventing God's Law: How the Covenant Code of

---

[95] Hoffmeier, J.K. *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

[96] Finkel, Irving. *The Ark Before Noah: Decoding the Story of the Flood*. Hodder and Stoughton, 2014.

[97] Morris, H.M. & Whitcomb, J.C. *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications*. P&R Publishing, 1961/2011.

Exodus 21–23 Recontextualizes and Revises Hammurabi's Laws (2009), demonstrates how the Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22–23:33) systematically revises Hammurabi, adapting casuistic laws (e.g., on ox goring, Hammurabi §250–252 vs. Exodus 21:28–32) to fit Israelite covenant theology.

Hittite treaty forms (c. 1400 BCE) influenced Deuteronomy's structure—preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, blessings/curses—as Suzanne Boorer details in *The Promise of the Land as Oath*.[98] These borrowings show biblical laws as contextual developments, not divine originals, challenging inerrancy by revealing cultural evolution.

Wisdom Literature and Poetic Parallels

Job and Proverbs echo ANE wisdom texts. Job's theodicy resembles the Babylonian Ludlul bel nemeqi ("I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom," c. 1200 BCE), where a sufferer questions divine justice amid affliction, restored after praise—paralleling Job's trials and restoration (Job 42). The Dialogue of Pessimism (Mesopotamian) mirrors Job's debates with friends. Proverbs shares aphorisms with the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope (c. 1200 BCE); Proverbs 22:17–23:11 closely parallels Amenemope's teachings on honesty and the poor, as Michael V. Fox analyzes in *Proverbs 10–31 (The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries)*.[99]

Psalms draw from Ugaritic poetry; Psalm 29's storm theophany echoes Baal hymns, with Yahweh supplanting Baal as thunderer, as Frank Moore Cross explores in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*.[100]

Prophetic and Apocalyptic Influences

Prophetic motifs borrow from ANE oracles; Isaiah 14:12–15's "morning star" (Lucifer) parallels the Canaanite myth of Athtar's failed ascent, per Ugaritic texts. Apocalyptic literature like Daniel draws from Persian and Hellenistic ideas, with its

---

[98] Boorer, Suzanne. *The Promise of the Land as Oath: A Key to the Formation of the Pentateuch*. De Gruyter, 1992.
[99] Fox, M.V. *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries)*. Yale University Press, 2009.
[100] Cross, F.M. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel.* Harvard University Press, 1997.

"son of man" (Daniel 7:13) echoing Ugaritic "rider of the clouds" for Baal, as John J. Collins notes in *The Apocalyptic Imagination*.[101]

New Testament and Hellenistic Borrowings

While primarily influenced by Jewish traditions, the New Testament incorporates Greco-Roman elements. The virgin birth in Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 1:26–38 parallels myths of divine begettings (e.g., Alexander the Great's conception by Zeus), though adapted to messianic prophecy (Isaiah 7:14). Mystery religion motifs, like dying-rising gods (Osiris, Adonis), influence resurrection narratives, as argued by Jonathan Z. Smith in *Drudgery Divine*.[102] Paul's Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11:23–26) echoes Mithraic meals, per Franz Cumont's *The Mysteries of Mithra*.[103]

Implications for Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism

These mythological influences reveal the Bible as a culturally embedded text, not an inerrant, isolated revelation. Dispensationalists, interpreting prophecies like Zechariah 14 as literal end-times battles involving Israel, overlook how such apocalyptic imagery borrows from ANE chaoskampf motifs (e.g., Yahweh vs. Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1, akin to Marduk vs. Tiamat), reducing them to symbolic resistance literature. Christian Zionists, citing "unique" covenants for Israel's land (e.g., Genesis 15), ignore parallels to Hittite suzerainty treaties, which could foster dialogue over dominance in the OPT.

3.6 Errors in Transmission and Textual Variants

Following the exploration of ancient myths and Near Eastern influences in Subsection 3.5, which illustrated the Bible's cultural embeddedness and adaptive nature, this subsection examines errors in transmission and textual variants that arose during centuries of manual copying. Before the invention of the printing press (c. 1440 CE), biblical texts were reproduced by scribes, often working in scriptoria or individually, leading to unintentional mistakes (e.g., omissions, duplications) and intentional alterations (e.g., for doctrinal clarification or harmonization). As textual

---

[101] Collins, J. J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 3rd ed. Eerdmans, 2016.
[102] Smith, J.Z. *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.
[103] Cumont, Franz. *The Mysteries of Mithra*. Hardpress Publishing, (1903, reprinted 2012).

critic Bart D. Ehrman details in *Misquoting Jesus*, these variants number in the hundreds of thousands for the New Testament alone, with no two manuscripts identical, stemming from factors like poor lighting, fatigue, or theological biases.[104]

For the Hebrew Bible, discrepancies between the Masoretic Text (MT, standardized c. 10th century CE), the Septuagint (LXX, Greek translation c. 3rd–1st centuries BCE), and Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS, c. 3rd century BCE–1st century CE) reveal similar issues. These errors challenge biblical inerrancy, as articulated in the Chicago Statement (1978), by showing the "original autographs" are lost, and extant texts are reconstructions fraught with uncertainty. Dispensationalists and Christian Zionists, relying on precise wording for prophetic timelines (e.g., Daniel 9:24–27's "seventy weeks" as 490 literal years leading to Israel's restoration), must confront how variants alter meanings, potentially shifting focus from rigid literalism to ethical interpretations that prioritize justice in regions like the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

Types of Scribal Errors and Their Mechanisms

Scribal errors typically fall into categories such as visual mistakes, auditory confusions, or memory lapses during dictation. Common unintentional errors include:

- Haplography (omitting text due to similar adjacent words): In 1 Samuel 13:1 (MT), Saul's reign is given as "two years," but the LXX omits the number entirely, likely because the Hebrew phrase "son of one year" resembled nearby text, leading to skipping. This affects historical timelines, as noted by Emanuel Tov in *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, who attributes it to eye-skip.[105]
- Dittography (duplicating text): An example appears in some manuscripts of Jeremiah 51:3, where "let the archer bend his bow" is repeated, inflating the verse. Tov documents how such repetitions occur when scribes glance back incorrectly.

---

[104] Ehrman, B. D. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. HarperOne, 2005.

[105] Tov, Emanuel (Ed.) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Revised and Expanded Fourth Edition.* Fortress Press, 2022.

- Metathesis (transposing letters or words): In 2 Kings 20:4–5 (MT), Isaiah's message to Hezekiah varies in word order from the LXX, potentially changing emphasis from divine hearing to action.
- Harmonization: Scribes often altered texts to align parallel passages. For instance, the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4 differs; some later manuscripts of Luke add phrases from Matthew (e.g., "Your will be done on earth as in heaven") to harmonize, as Bruce M. Metzger explains in *The Text of the New Testament*.[106]

Intentional changes include theological emendations, such as anti-adoptionist additions to combat heresies. Ehrman, in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, argues scribes modified texts to support orthodoxy, like inserting "Son of God" into Mark 1:1 in some manuscripts (e.g., Codex Sinaiticus corrections) to affirm Jesus's divinity from the outset.[107]

Old Testament Variants and Manuscript Traditions

The Hebrew Bible's transmission involved multiple traditions, with significant variants revealed by the DSS, discovered in Qumran (1947–1956). These scrolls, dating to 250 BCE–68 CE, show a fluid text before standardization.

- Samuel Variants: 4QSam^a (a DSS manuscript) includes a paragraph absent in the MT but present in the LXX (after 1 Samuel 10:27), describing Nahash the Ammonite gouging out eyes, providing context for Saul's campaign. Josephus (Antiquities 6.68–71, c. 94 CE) corroborates this, suggesting the MT omitted it via haplography, per Frank Moore Cross in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*.[108]
- Jeremiah's Two Versions: The MT Jeremiah is about one-seventh longer than the LXX and some DSS fragments (e.g., 4QJer^b), with reordered chapters and added details. For example, MT Jeremiah 27:1 dates an oracle

---

[106] Metzger, B.M., & Ehrman, B.D. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration (4th ed.)*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
[107] Ehrman, B.D. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament, Updated Ed*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
[108] Cross, F.M. & Talmon, S. *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*. Harvard Universtiy Press, 1975.

to Jehoiakim, but LXX to Zedekiah; scholars like Eugene Ulrich in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible* posit two editions, with the shorter LXX reflecting an earlier Hebrew Vorlage, challenging claims of a single inerrant text.[109]

- Psalm Variants: DSS Psalm scrolls (e.g., 11QPs^a) include non-MT psalms and different orders, such as placing Psalm 31 after 33, indicating liturgical fluidity. John J. Collins, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls – A Biography*, notes this reflects community-specific collections, not a fixed canon.[110]

Archaeological evidence, like the Silver Scrolls from Ketef Hinnom (c. 600 BCE), contain variants of Numbers 6:24–26's priestly blessing, with minor wording differences from the MT, highlighting early transmission inconsistencies.

New Testament Variants and Manuscript Evidence

With over 5,800 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin versions, and others, the New Testament has more variants than words (c. 400,000 variants vs. 138,000 words), per Ehrman (2005).[111] Most are minor, but some affect doctrine.

- **The Longer Ending of Mark (16:9–20):** Absent in early manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4th century), this passage—describing resurrection appearances, speaking in tongues, and handling snakes—is a 2nd-century addition, as Metzger (2005) confirms via stylistic analysis (e.g., 17 unique words not in Mark). Its inclusion in the KJV (1611) stems from later Byzantine texts, influencing Pentecostal practices despite its spurious nature.[112]
- **The Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11):** The story of Jesus and the adulterous woman is missing from the earliest manuscripts (e.g., Papyri 66 and 75, c. 200–300 CE) and shifts positions in others, suggesting insertion from oral tradition. Ehrman (2005) notes its absence in commentaries by

[109] Ulrich, Eugene. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible (Vetus Testamentum, Supplements).* Brill Academic, 2017.
[110] Collins, J.J. *The Dead Sea Scrolls – A Biography*. Princeton University Press, 2012.
[111] Ehrman. *Misquoting Jesus*, 2005.
[112] Metzger & Ehrman. *The Text of the New Testament*, 2005.

Origen (3rd century), indicating it was not original, yet it's bracketed in modern Bibles like the NIV.[113]

- **The Comma Johanneum (1 John 5:7–8):** This Trinitarian clause ("For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one") appears only in late Latin manuscripts (post-8th century) and was inserted into Greek texts in the 16th century for Erasmus's Textus Receptus. Metzger (2005) labels it a marginal gloss that entered the Vulgate, absent in all early Greek witnesses, undermining its use in Trinitarian proofs.[114]
- **Christological Variants:** In Hebrews 1:3, some manuscripts read "who cleanses sins" (katharismon), others "bearing all things" (pherōn), altering emphasis. Luke 22:43–44's angel strengthening Jesus and bloody sweat is missing in early texts like Codex Alexandrinus, possibly added for anti-docetic reasons.

Numerical variants abound: In Revelation 13:18, the "number of the beast" is 666 in most manuscripts but 616 in Papyrus 115 (3rd century) and Codex Ephraemi (5th century), reflecting gematria variations (Nero Caesar in Hebrew yields 666, in Latin 616).

Implications for Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism

These transmission errors and variants erode the doctrine of inerrancy, as no "original" text exists—only approximations via eclectic editions like the Nestle-Aland (28th ed., 2012) or United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (5th ed., 2014). Dispensationalists, such as Charles C. Ryrie in *Dispensationalism*, insist on verbal plenary inspiration for precise prophecies, yet variants in Daniel 9:25 (MT "anointed one" vs. LXX "christos") affect calculations of the Messiah's arrival, complicating timelines tied to Israel's 1948 statehood.[115] Christian Zionists, citing Romans 11:29's "irrevocable gifts and calling" for Israel's land promises, overlook variants in related texts (e.g., differing Old Greek readings of Genesis 15:18's boundaries), which could encourage viewing covenants as theological ideals rather than territorial mandates. This critical awareness promotes ethical engagement

[113] Ehrman. Misquoting Jesus, 2005.
[114] Metzger & Ehrman. The Text of the New Testament, 2005.
[115] Ryrie, C.C. *Dispensationalism*. Moody Publishers, 1965/2007.

with OPT issues aligning with biblical calls for justice (Isaiah 42:1–4) over flawed literalism.

3.7 Errors and Biases in Translation

Building upon the analysis of transmission errors and textual variants in Subsection 3.6, which revealed the Bible's manuscripts as fluid and humanly mediated reconstructions rather than pristine originals, this subsection investigates errors and biases inherent in the translation process. Translation is not a neutral act but involves interpretive choices influenced by linguistic ambiguities, cultural contexts, theological presuppositions, and ideological agendas of translators. Ancient biblical languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek—lack modern punctuation, vowels (in early Hebrew), and sometimes clear grammatical markers, leading to multiple possible renderings. As Eugene A. Nida, pioneer of dynamic equivalence theory, explains in *Toward a Science of Translating*, translations inevitably reflect the target language's idioms and the translators' worldviews, potentially introducing distortions.[116] Historical translations, from the Septuagint (LXX, c. 250 BCE) to the Vulgate (c. 405 CE) and modern versions like the King James Version (KJV, 1611), New International Version (NIV, 1978, revised 2011), or English Standard Version (ESV, 2001), exhibit biases ranging from political (e.g., monarchical favoritism in the KJV) to doctrinal (e.g., evangelical emphases in the NIV). These issues further undermine biblical inerrancy by showing that no translation is "error-free," as meanings shift across languages and eras. For dispensationalists and Christian Zionists, who rely on specific phrasings for prophetic fulfillments—such as "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 prefiguring Jesus or "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 implying modern Israel's salvation—these translation choices can skew interpretations, encouraging a reevaluation toward ethical hermeneutics that prioritize justice over literalism in contexts like the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), where disputed translations of land promises (e.g., Genesis 15:18) have fueled conflicts.

Types of Translation Errors and Biases

Translation errors arise from linguistic challenges, while biases stem from intentional choices. Key categories include:

---

[116] Nida, E.A. *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating (Second edition).* Brill, 1964/2003.

- **Lexical Ambiguities:** Words with multiple meanings require subjective selection. For instance, Hebrew re'em (e.g., Numbers 23:22) is translated as "unicorn" in the KJV but "wild ox" in modern versions like the NIV, based on comparative philology with Akkadian rimu, as discussed by Brent A. Strawn in *What Is Stronger than a Lion?*.[117]
- **Grammatical Uncertainties:** Hebrew's lack of vowels in early texts leads to variant readings; e.g., qere (read) vs. ketiv (written) in the Masoretic Text (MT). Greek particles like kai can mean "and" or "even," altering emphasis.
- **Cultural and Idiomatic Gaps:** Idioms don't transfer directly; e.g., "horn" (qeren in Hebrew) symbolizes power, but literal translations obscure this.
- **Theological Biases:** Translators infuse doctrine; e.g., the NIV's complementarian leanings influence gender roles.
- **Ideological Influences:** Political contexts shape choices; the KJV, commissioned by King James I, emphasizes divine right of kings.

David Daniell, in *The Bible in English*, notes how translations serve power structures, from the LXX's Hellenistic adaptations to colonial-era Bibles promoting imperialism.[118]

Old Testament Translation Issues

The Hebrew Bible's translation history is rife with errors and biases, often amplifying or altering original intents.

- Isaiah 7:14's "Virgin" vs. "Young Woman": The Hebrew almah means "young woman" (possibly married), but the LXX renders it parthenos ("virgin"), influencing Matthew 1:23's fulfillment citation. The KJV follows with "virgin," supporting virgin birth doctrine, but scholars like Joseph A. Fitzmyer in The Gospel According to Luke I–IX (1981, Anchor Bible) argue almah implies youth, not virginity (cf. betulah for virgin). This bias bolsters Christological claims but misrepresents the original Ahaz-era sign (a child named Immanuel amid Assyrian threats), as John J. Collins details in *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*.[119]

---

[117] Strawn, B.A. *What Is Stronger Than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005.
[118] Daniell, David. *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*. Yale University Press, 2003.
[119] Collins, J.J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Third Edition*. Fortress Press, 2018.

- Psalm 22:16's "Pierced" Hands and Feet: The MT reads "like a lion [ka'ari] my hands and feet," but the LXX and some Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS, e.g., 5/6HevPs) suggest "they pierced [ka'aru]," translated as such in the NIV and ESV to foreshadow crucifixion. Tov (2022)[120] attributes this to scribal confusion of similar letters (yod vs. vav), but Christian translations favor the messianic reading, biasing toward typology, per Marvin A. Sweeney in *Reading the Hebrew Bible After the Shoah*.[121]
- Genesis 1:1–2's Creation: The KJV's "In the beginning God created" implies creatio ex nihilo, but Hebrew bereshit can mean "When God began to create," with tohu wabohu as preexistent chaos, aligning with ancient Near Eastern views. Ellen van Wolde, in *Reframing Biblical Studies*, argues for a non-absolute beginning, challenging young-earth creationism in translations like the NRSV ("When God began...").[122]
- Amos 9:11–12's "Booth of David": The MT says Israel will "possess the remnant of Edom," but the LXX (cited in Acts 15:16–18) reads "that the remnant of humankind may seek the Lord," universalizing the prophecy. This shift, possibly from misreading adam (humanity) for Edom, influences Christian missions, as analyzed by Shalom M. Paul in *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*.[123]

Biases appear in gender renderings; e.g., ishah in Genesis 2:23 is "woman" but could emphasize complementarity, yet patriarchal translations like the KJV diminish Eve's role, per Phyllis A. Bird in *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*.[124]

New Testament Translation Challenges

Koine Greek's nuances lead to varied interpretations, compounded by theological stakes.

---

[120] Tov, Emanuel (Ed.) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Revised and Expanded Fourth Edition.* Fortress Press, 2022.
[121] Sweeney, M.A. *Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology*. Fortress Press, 2008.
[122] Wolde, E.V. *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context.* Eisenbrauns, 2009.
[123] Paul, S.M. *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos (Hermeneia).* Fortress Press, 1990.
[124] Bird, P.A. (Ed.) *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel (Overtures to Biblical Theology).* Fortress Press, 1997.

- Romans 16:7's "Junia" vs. "Junias": Paul greets "Junia... outstanding among the apostles," but some translations (e.g., older NIV) change to masculine "Junias" to avoid a female apostle. Eldon Jay Epp, in *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, confirms the feminine form in early manuscripts, revealing androcentric bias in versions like the ESV's footnotes.[125]
- 1 Timothy 2:12's Gender Roles: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man" uses authentein (rare, meaning "domineer" or "usurp"), but complementarian translations like the ESV render it "exercise authority," supporting male headship. Cynthia Long Westfall, in *Paul and Gender*, argues for contextual rendering as "not to domineer," challenging restrictive biases.[126]
- Matthew 5:22's "Hell": Jesus warns against calling someone "fool" lest one be liable to "hell [geenna] of fire." But geenna refers to the Valley of Hinnom (a judgment site), not eternal torment; the KJV's "hell" imports later doctrine, per Edward William Fudge in *The Fire That Consumes*.[127] Modern versions like the NET retain "hell" but note the metaphor.
- John 1:1's "Word": "The Word was God" translates logos (philosophical term), but biases toward Trinitarianism ignore Stoic connotations. Raymond E. Brown, in *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)*, discusses how translations emphasize divinity over wisdom personified (cf. Proverbs 8).[128]

Cultural biases in colonial translations: The 19th-century missionary Bibles in Africa and Asia adapted terms to align with European norms, e.g., rendering doulos (slave) mildly as "servant" to downplay slavery critiques, as Lamin Sanneh explores in *Translating the Message*.[129]

---

[125] Epp, E.J. *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*. Fortress Press, 2005.
[126] Westfall, C.L. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*. Baker Academic, 2016.
[127] Fudge, E.W. *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment. 3rd edition, fully updated, revised and expanded*. Cascade Books, 2011.
[128] Brown, R.E. *The Gospel According to John (I-XII) (Anchor Bible Commentaries).* Yale University Press, 2007.
[129] Sanneh, Lamin. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture (Revised, Expanded).* Orbis Books, 2009.

Implications for Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism

Translation errors and biases erode claims of an inerrant, univocal Bible by highlighting interpretive subjectivity, urging caution in prophetic applications. Dispensationalists, as outlined by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock in *Progressive Dispensationalism*, parse terms like "this generation" in Matthew 24:34 literally for end-times signs, yet translations vary (e.g., NIV's inclusive "generation" vs. possible "race").[130] In Romans 11:26's "all Israel will be saved," "Israel" could mean spiritual or ethnic; Zionist-leaning translations like the *Scofield Reference Bible* bias toward modern Jews, influencing support for Israel's policies. Christian Zionists, citing "Palestine" in older translations (e.g., KJV Joel 3:4, from Peleshet meaning Philistines), anachronistically apply it to modern geopolitics, overlooking that eretz Yisrael (land of Israel) has fluid boundaries in Hebrew. Scholars like Gary M. Burge in *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* argue such biases perpetuate injustices in the OPT, including water access denials affecting 180,000 Palestinians (per World Bank reports, 2025).[131] Recognizing translation fluidity fosters a hermeneutic of humility, aligning with biblical justice themes (Micah 6:8) over biased literalism that exacerbates humanitarian crises, such as Gaza's 2024–2025 blockade impacting 2.3 million (UN reports).

3.8 Harmonization Attempts and Apocalyptic Literature

Extending the discussion from Subsection 3.7, which highlighted how translation errors and biases introduce interpretive subjectivity and distort original meanings, thereby challenging notions of an inerrant text, this subsection examines harmonization attempts and the complexities of apocalyptic literature. Harmonization refers to scholarly or theological efforts to reconcile apparent contradictions or discrepancies within the biblical canon, often driven by a commitment to inerrancy that assumes underlying unity despite surface inconsistencies. These attempts, while creative, frequently reveal the Bible's composite nature, shaped by diverse authors, editors, and historical contexts. Complementing this, apocalyptic literature—characterized by symbolic visions, eschatological themes, and dualistic worldviews—poses unique interpretive challenges due to its genre-specific conventions, borrowings from extrabiblical

---

[130] Blaising, C.A. & Bock, D.L. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. Baker Academic, 2000.

[131] Burge, G.M. *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians (Revised, Updated).* Pilgrim Press, 2020.

sources, and susceptibility to variant readings. As John J. Collins notes in *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, apocalyptic texts like Daniel and Revelation are not literal prophecies but rhetorical devices employing metaphor and pseudonymity to address crises, such as persecution under empires.[132] Together, these elements underscore the Bible's human authorship and cultural embeddedness, undermining dispensationalist literalism that treats texts as precise blueprints for end-times events. For Christian Zionists, who harmonize prophecies to support modern Israel's role in apocalyptic scenarios (e.g., Ezekiel's temple as a future Third Temple), such approaches can perpetuate geopolitical tensions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), where literalist interpretations have justified actions leading to over 5,000 evictions in 2024–2025 (per Human Rights Watch and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reports), diverting focus from ethical imperatives like peace and justice.

Harmonization Attempts: Reconciling Biblical Discrepancies

Harmonization efforts aim to resolve tensions between parallel accounts, chronological inconsistencies, or doctrinal variances, often through supplementary explanations, contextual reinterpretations, or appeals to divine mystery. These methods, while preserving faith in scriptural unity, highlight the texts' redactional layers and human origins, as critiqued by scholars like Bart D. Ehrman in *Jesus, Interrupted*.[133]

- **Gospel Harmonies and Synoptic Problems:** The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) share material but diverge in details, prompting ancient harmonizations like Tatian's Diatessaron (c. 170 CE), which wove them into a single narrative. For instance, the resurrection accounts vary: Mark 16:1–8 (original ending) has women fleeing in fear without sightings, while Matthew 28:1–10 includes an angel and Jesus encounter, Luke 24:1–12 adds Peter at the tomb, and John 20:1–18 features Mary Magdalene's dialogue. Harmonizers propose sequential events (e.g., multiple angel visits), but Amy-Jill Levine in *The Misunderstood Jew* argues these reflect

[132] Collins, J. J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, 3rd ed.* Eerdmans, 2016.
[133] Ehrman, B.D. *Jesus, Interrupted. Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them).* HarperCollins, 2009.

theological emphases—Mark's ambiguity versus John's intimacy—rather than historical reportage, challenging inerrancy.[134]

- **Old Testament Chronological Discrepancies:** Kings and Chronicles offer conflicting timelines; e.g., 2 Kings 24:8 states Jehoiachin reigned three months, but 2 Chronicles 36:9 says three months and ten days. Harmonizers attribute this to inclusive vs. exclusive counting, per Gleason L. Archer in Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties (1982).[135] Yet, archaeological evidence (e.g., Babylonian Chronicle tablets, c. 595–594 BCE) supports the shorter period, suggesting scribal approximation, as Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman discuss in *The Bible Unearthed*.[136]
- **Doctrinal Harmonizations:** Contradictions in soteriology, like James 2:24 ("justified by works") versus Romans 3:28 ("justified by faith apart from works"), are reconciled by distinguishing "works of law" from "good deeds," as in Martin Luther's prefaces (1522), which downplayed James. However, Ehrman views this as evidence of early Christian diversity, not unified doctrine.[137]
- **Genealogical Variants:** Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38's differing lineages of Jesus (Matthew via Solomon, Luke via Nathan) are harmonized as legal (Joseph) vs. biological (Mary), per Darrell L. Bock in Luke 1:1–9:50 (1994, BECNT), but textual critics like Metzger note these as theological constructs emphasizing Davidic descent, not historical records.[138]

Modern apologists like Norman L. Geisler in *When Critics Ask* employ harmonization to defend inerrancy, yet critics argue it imposes artificial unity on diverse traditions.[139]

---

[134] Levine, Amy-Jill. *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*. HarperOne, 2007.
[135] Archer, G.L. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, Based on the NIV and the NASB*. Zondervan, 1982.
[136] Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. Free Press, 2001.
[137] Ehrman, B.D. *Jesus, Interrupted. Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them).* HarperCollins, 2009.
[138] Metzger, B.M., & Ehrman, B.D. The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration (4th ed.). Oxford University Press, 2005.
[139] Geisler, N.L. *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties*. Baker Books, 1992.

Characteristics and Challenges of Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalyptic literature, emerging in Judaism (c. 200 BCE–100 CE) amid Hellenistic and Roman oppression, features encrypted symbolism, heavenly revelations, and end-time judgments, often pseudonymous (attributed to ancient figures like Enoch or Daniel). As Collins explains, it draws from Persian, Babylonian, and Canaanite motifs, prioritizing hope for the oppressed over literal prediction.[140]

- **Daniel's Visions and Influences:** Daniel 7–12's beasts and "son of man" (7:13) symbolize empires (e.g., lion=Babylon, bear=Media), borrowed from Mesopotamian imagery, per John E. Goldingay in *Daniel*.[141] The "abomination of desolation" (11:31) refers to Antiochus IV's altar (167 BCE), not future antichrists, yet dispensationalists harmonize it with Matthew 24:15 for tribulation scenarios, ignoring genre, as Mitchell G. Reddish critiques in *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader*.[142]
- **Revelation's Symbolism:** John's apocalypse uses numerology (e.g., 666 as Nero's gematria, per David E. Aune in Revelation 6–16[143]) and imagery like the whore of Babylon (ch. 17, symbolizing Rome). Variants (e.g., 616 in some manuscripts) and borrowings from Ezekiel complicate literalism. Adela Yarbro Collins in *Crisis and Catharsis* views it as resistance literature, not timetable.[144]
- **Non-Canonical Apocalypses:** Texts like 1 Enoch (influencing Jude 1:14–15) and 4 Ezra describe cosmic battles, showing apocalyptic as a fluid genre. Pseudonymity (e.g., Enoch authorship) aided authority, per James H. Charlesworth in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*.[145]

---

[140] Collins, J. J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, 3rd ed*. Eerdmans, 2016.
[141] Goldingay, J.E. *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 30, Daniel*. Thomas Nelson Inc., 1989.
[142] Reddish, M.G. *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader*. Hendrickson Academic, 1996.
[143] Aune, D.E. Revelation 6-16 (Word Biblical Commentary 52b). Thomas Nelson Inc., 1998.
[144] Collins, A.Y. *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. The Westminster Press, 1984.
[145] Charlesworth, J.H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library).* Yale University Press, 1983.

- **Intertextual Borrowings:** Revelation echoes Daniel (e.g., ten horns in Rev. 13:1 from Dan. 7:7), but adapts for Christian audiences, as Greg Carey explores in *Ultimate Things*.[146]

These features resist literal interpretation, emphasizing symbolic resistance over predictive accuracy.

Examples and Cases of Harmonization in Apocalyptic Contexts

Harmonization often intersects with apocalyptic texts, where symbolic language invites diverse readings.

- **Daniel 9:24–27's "Seventy Weeks":** Variously interpreted as 490 years ending in 164 BCE (Maccabean revolt) or extended to Jesus/ future, with dispensationalists like Harold Hoehner in Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ (1977) harmonizing gaps for a 7-year tribulation. Yet DSS variants (e.g., 4QDan) suggest fluid chronology, per Ulrich (2015).[147]
- **Ezekiel's Temple (chs. 40–48) and Revelation 21:** Ezekiel's visionary temple is harmonized with Revelation's new Jerusalem as a future literal structure, supporting Zionist rebuilding efforts, per the Scofield Bible. However, Paul Joyce in *Ezekiel: A Commentary* sees it as ideal symbolism, not blueprint.[148]
- **Olivet Discourse Harmonization**: Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21's end-times signs are blended despite differences (e.g., Luke's "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" vs. Matthew's abomination), as in John F. Walvoord's *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*[149], but N.T. Wright in *Jesus and the Victory of God* argues for 70 CE fulfillment.[150]

Case: The Left Behind series (LaHaye and Jenkins, 1995–2007) harmonizes Revelation with Daniel for a pre-tribulation rapture, influencing millions but

---

[146] Carey, Greg. *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature.* Chalice Press, 2005.
[147] Ulrich, Eugene. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible (Vetus Testamentum, Supplements).* Brill Academic, 2017.
[148] Joyce, P.M. *Ezekiel: A Commentary*. T&T Clark International, 2009.
[149] Walvoord, J.F. *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*. Victor Books, 1990.
[150] Wright, N.T. *Jesus and the Victory of God (Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume 2).* Fortress Press, 1997.

critiqued for ignoring apocalyptic genre by Barbara R. Rossing in *The Rapture Exposed.*[151]

Implications for Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism

Harmonization and apocalyptic literature expose the Bible's interpretive elasticity, countering dispensationalist claims of consistent, literal prophecy as in Ryrie's Dispensationalism.[152] By forcing unity on diverse texts, these approaches risk anachronism, as in linking Gog/Magog (Ezekiel 38–39) to modern Russia, per Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*.[153] Christian Zionists harmonize "dry bones" (Ezekiel 37) with 1948 Israel, justifying support. This literalism overlooks symbolic intent, fostering injustice. Instead, viewing apocalyptic as crisis literature encourages ethical engagement, aligning with calls for reconciliation (Isaiah 2:4).

3.9 Dead Sea Scrolls and the Evolution of Biblical Texts

Building on Subsection 3.8, which explored harmonization attempts and the symbolic nature of apocalyptic literature—revealing efforts to impose unity on inherently diverse and contextually shaped biblical materials—this subsection turns to the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) as empirical evidence of the Bible's textual evolution. Discovered between 1947 and 1956 in the Qumran caves near the Dead Sea, the DSS comprise over 900 manuscripts, including the oldest known copies of Hebrew Bible texts (dating from c. 250 BCE to 68 CE), sectarian documents, and pseudepigrapha. As James C. VanderKam details in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, these scrolls, associated with the Essene community, demonstrate that biblical texts were not fixed or inerrant originals but dynamic traditions undergoing revision, expansion, and adaptation across centuries.[154] This fluidity challenges the doctrine of biblical inerrancy by illustrating how scriptures evolved through scribal practices, community needs, and cultural influences, rather than being divinely preserved in a singular form.

Emanuel Tov, in *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, classifies DSS variants into proto-Masoretic, pre-Samaritan, and Septuagint-aligned texts, underscoring a

---

[151] Rossing, B.R. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*. Basic Books, 2004.
[152] Ryrie, C.C. *Dispensationalism.* Moody Publishers, 1965/2007.
[153] Lindsey, H. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Zondervan, 1970.
[154] Vanderkam, J.C. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today, 2nd. ed*. Eerdmans, 2010.

pluriform textual landscape before canonization.[155] For dispensationalists and Christian Zionists, who rely on "literal" readings of prophecies (e.g., Ezekiel's restoration visions as blueprints for modern Israel), the DSS reveal interpretive flexibility, urging caution against anachronistic applications that fuel conflicts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). For instance, variants in territorial promises (e.g., Genesis scrolls) have been invoked in land disputes, contributing to over 6,000 settlement-related incidents in 2024–2025 (per reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA] and Israeli NGO Peace Now), highlighting the ethical imperative to prioritize historical context over rigid literalism.

Discovery and Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls

The DSS were unearthed in 11 caves at Qumran, with key finds including the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a, c. 125 BCE) and fragments of nearly every Hebrew Bible book except Esther. As recounted by Geza Vermes in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, the scrolls were likely hidden by Essenes during the First Jewish-Roman War (66–73 CE).[156] Their significance lies in bridging a millennium-long gap between the composition of biblical texts and the earliest complete manuscripts (e.g., Codex Leningradensis, 1008 CE for the Masoretic Text [MT]). Unlike the standardized MT, the DSS exhibit textual diversity, with orthographic variations, additions, and omissions reflecting oral traditions, scribal creativity, and theological emphases. Frank Moore Cross in *The Ancient Library of Qumran* argues this plurality indicates that "the Bible" was a collection of evolving texts, not a monolithic entity, challenging claims of verbatim divine inspiration.[157]

Non-biblical scrolls, such as the Community Rule (1QS) and War Scroll (1QM), provide context: they reveal a sectarian group anticipating apocalyptic battles, influencing interpretations of biblical eschatology. The scrolls' preservation in a dry climate allowed paleographic dating, confirming pre-Christian origins and illuminating the transition from fluid texts to stabilized canons, as discussed by Sidnie White Crawford in *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (2008).[158]

---

[155] Tov, Emanuel (Ed.) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Revised and Expanded Fourth Edition.* Fortress Press, 2022.
[156] Vermes, Géza. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 7th ed.* Penguin Classics, 2012.
[157] Cross, F.M. et al. *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 3rd ed. Fortress Press, 2000.
[158] Crawford, S.W. *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*. Eerdmans, 2008.

Textual Variants and Evidence of Evolution

The DSS demonstrate that biblical texts evolved through harmonistic expansions, exegetical rewritings, and adaptations to contemporary concerns, per Tov's analysis of "textual families."[159]

- **Proto-Masoretic vs. Other Traditions:** About 35% of DSS biblical scrolls align closely with the MT, but others diverge significantly. For example, the Samaritan Pentateuch-aligned texts (e.g., 4QExod-Lev^f) include additions emphasizing Mount Gerizim, showing sectarian variants predating the Samaritan schism (c. 4th century BCE).
- **Harmonistic Additions:** Scribes inserted material to resolve inconsistencies, e.g., 4Q382 (Paraphrase of Kings) expands on 1 Kings with details from Chronicles, illustrating efforts to unify narratives, akin to later rabbinic midrash.
- **Orthographic and Linguistic Evolution**: Scrolls show shifts from archaic to late Hebrew, with plene spelling (vowel letters) increasing over time, reflecting linguistic development rather than static preservation.

Eugene Ulrich, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible*, posits a "successive literary editions" model, where texts like Jeremiah existed in shorter (LXX-aligned) and longer (MT) forms, both represented in Qumran (e.g., 4QJer^b short, 4QJer^a long).[160]

Examples from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

The DSS provide concrete cases of textual evolution, often aligning more with the Septuagint (LXX) than the MT, suggesting the MT is a later standardization.

- **Isaiah Scrolls:** The complete 1QIsa^a differs from the MT in over 2,600 places, mostly minor (e.g., spelling), but includes theological variants like Isaiah 53:11's "he shall see light" (absent in MT but present in LXX and 1QIsa^b), enhancing messianic readings. John J. Collins in *The Scepter and*

[159] Tov, Emanuel (Ed.) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Revised and Expanded Fourth Edition.* Fortress Press, 2022.
[160] Ulrich, Eugene. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible (Vetus Testamentum, Supplements).* Brill Academic, 2017.

the Star notes how this supports suffering servant interpretations, but its absence in some traditions shows editorial fluidity.[161]

- **Samuel Manuscripts:** 4QSam^a preserves readings closer to the LXX and Josephus than the MT; e.g., in 1 Samuel 11, it includes a paragraph about Nahash the Ammonite's siege (omitted in MT), explaining Saul's actions. Cross attributes this to a pre-MT recension, evidencing expansion for narrative coherence.[162]
- **Psalms Variants:** The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a) rearranges order (e.g., placing Psalm 151, known from LXX) and adds non-canonical compositions like the "Plea for Deliverance," indicating psalters were fluid collections used in worship, as James A. Sanders analyzes in *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11*.[163]
- **Daniel and Apocalyptic Evolution:** Qumran yields eight Daniel manuscripts (e.g., 4QDan^a), including proto-MT and variant forms. Notably, they lack the additions in Catholic Bibles (e.g., Susanna), but show expansions in eschatological sections; 4Q246 (Aramaic Apocalypse) echoes Daniel 7's "son of God" figure, influencing messianic expectations. Daniel C. Harlow in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* links this to evolving apocalypticism, with pseudonymity allowing updates to prophecies.[164]
- **Genesis and Territorial Promises:** Fragments like 4QGen-Exod^a vary in phrasing of Genesis 15:18's land grant ("from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates"), with some emphasizing covenantal conditions (e.g., obedience), per Sidnie White Crawford (2008). This fluidity undermines Zionist literalism, as variants suggest conditional rather than eternal promises.

Case: The Great Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a) includes a hymn attributing composition to David "through prophecy," revealing how attribution evolved to

---

[161] Collins, J.J. *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2nd Ed.* Eerdmans, 2010.
[162] Cross, F.M. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel.* Harvard University Press, 1997.
[163] Sanders, J.A. *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert).* Clarendon Press, 1997.
[164] Collins, J.J. & Harlow, D.C. (Eds.*) The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Eerdmans, 2010.

enhance authority, as Patrick W. Skehan discusses in Qumran Cave 11: II (11QPs^a) (1979, DJD XXIII).

Connections to the New Testament and Early Christianity

While primarily Hebrew Bible-focused, the DSS illuminate NT backgrounds, showing shared motifs and textual influences.

- **Messianic Texts:** 4Q521 describes a messiah who "frees captives, opens eyes of the blind," paralleling Luke 4:18 and Matthew 11:5, suggesting Qumran's influence on Jesus' self-understanding, per Craig A. Evans in *Jesus and His Contemporaries*.[165]
- **Habakkuk Commentary (1QpHab):** This pesher interprets Habakkuk 2:4 ("the righteous shall live by faith") eschatologically, akin to Paul's use in Romans 1:17, but with sectarian twists, as Maurya P. Horgan details in *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books*.[166]
- **NT Manuscript Fragments?** Debate surrounds 7Q5 (possibly Mark 6:52–53), but most scholars, like Robert H. Gundry in *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross,* reject it due to scant letters, emphasizing DSS's role in contextualizing NT rather than direct attestation.[167]

Implications for Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism

The DSS's evidence of textual evolution erodes inerrancy by portraying the Bible as a living tradition, not a fixed artifact, countering dispensationalist views of scripture as an unchanging prophetic code, as Charles C. Ryrie outlines in *Dispensationalism*.[168] Variants in Daniel and Isaiah challenge precise end-times timelines, such as the "seventy weeks" (Daniel 9), which Qumran pesharim apply to their era, not future tribulations. For Christian Zionists, scrolls like 4Q161 (Isaiah Pesher) reinterpret restoration prophecies symbolically for the community, not literally for modern Israel, per Gary M. Burge in *Jesus and the Land*.[169] This has real-

---

[165] Evans, C.A. *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*. Brill Academic, 1995.
[166] Horgan, M.P. *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books.* Pickwick Publications, 2023.
[167] Gundry, R.H. *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. Eerdmans, 1993.
[168] Ryrie, C.C. *Dispensationalism*. Moody Publishers, 1965/2007.
[169] Burge, G.M. *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to 'Holy Land' Theology*. Baker Academic, 2010.

world ramifications in the OPT, where literalist harmonizations of DSS-influenced texts (e.g., Ezekiel 37's "dry bones" as 1948) justify policies amid 2024–2025 crises, including water shortages affecting 1 million Palestinians (World Bank and B'Tselem reports). Embracing textual plurality fosters humble hermeneutics, aligning with justice themes (Amos 5:24) over biased eschatologies that exacerbate divisions.

3.10 Archaeological Findings and Historical Contradictions

Extending the insights from Subsection 3.9, which illuminated the Dead Sea Scrolls as evidence of the Bible's textual evolution through scribal revisions and pluriform traditions—thus portraying scriptures as dynamic human artifacts rather than immutable divine originals—this subsection examines archaeological findings that reveal historical contradictions within biblical narratives. Archaeology, as a discipline integrating material culture, epigraphy, and stratigraphy, provides empirical data that often diverges from the Bible's accounts, challenging claims of historical inerrancy. As William G. Dever argues in *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?*, while the Bible contains historical kernels, many narratives reflect ideological constructs, etiological myths, or later redactions rather than factual reportage.[170] Key discoveries from sites like Hazor, Megiddo, and Jerusalem underscore discrepancies in chronology, scale, and events, undermining literalist interpretations that treat the text as a precise historical record. For dispensationalists and Christian Zionists, who extrapolate prophetic fulfillments from purportedly accurate histories (e.g., Solomon's empire as a model for future Israelite dominance), these contradictions highlight the risks of anachronism, particularly in justifying modern territorial claims in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Such views have contributed to ongoing conflicts, with over 7,500 demolitions and evictions reported in 2024–2025 (per combined data from UN OCHA, Amnesty International, and the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing), diverting attention from archaeological evidence that promotes nuanced, ethical readings emphasizing coexistence over conquest.

Key Archaeological Methods and Discoveries

Archaeological approaches, including radiocarbon dating, ceramic typology, and geoarchaeology, have revolutionized biblical studies since the 19th century.

---

[170] Dever, W.G. *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

Pioneers like Kathleen Kenyon (excavations at Jericho, 1952–1958)[171] and modern scholars like Israel Finkelstein employ "low chronology" models, re-dating Iron Age strata to align with material evidence rather than biblical timelines. Significant finds include:

- **Tel Dan Stele (c. 9th century BCE):** Discovered in 1993, this Aramaic inscription mentions the "House of David" (byt dwd), providing extrabiblical evidence for David's dynasty. However, it confirms only a modest Judahite kingdom, not the vast empire described in 2 Samuel.
- **Mesha Stele (c. 840 BCE):** This Moabite inscription corroborates conflicts in 2 Kings 3 but contradicts biblical claims of Israelite victory, boasting Mesha's triumphs over Israel.
- **Assyrian Annals:** Texts like Sennacherib's Prism (c. 701 BCE) describe the siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18–19), aligning with Hezekiah's preparations (e.g., Siloam Tunnel), but omit miraculous deliverance, suggesting biblical embellishment, as Nadav Na'aman discusses in *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors.*[172]

These discoveries reveal a patchwork of historical accuracy amid ideological shaping, as Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman outline in *The Bible Unearthed*.[173]

Examples of Historical Contradictions in the Old Testament

Archaeological evidence frequently contradicts biblical depictions of events, scales, and chronologies, indicating that many narratives serve theological or nationalistic purposes.

- **The Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings:** Exodus describes a mass departure of 600,000 men (Exodus 12:37) from Egypt, followed by 40 years in the Sinai. However, no Egyptian records or archaeological traces (e.g., campsites) support this; surveys by Finkelstein in *The Archaeology of the*

[171] Kenyon, K.M. & T.A. *Holland Excavations at Jericho: Volumes 1-5.* Vol. 1 (1960), Vol. 2 (1965), Vol. 3 (1981), Vol. 4 (1982) and Vol. 5 (1983).
[172] Na'aman, Nadav. *Collected Essays, Volume 1: Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction*. Pennsylvania State university Press, 2005.
[173] Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. Free Press, 2001.

Israelite Settlement[174] and Thomas E. Levy in Israel's Exodus in *Transdisciplinary Perspective*[175] suggest a smaller-scale event or mythologized memory of Hyksos expulsions (c. 1550 BCE). Sites like Kadesh-Barnea show minimal Late Bronze Age occupation, contradicting Numbers 13–14.

- **Conquest of Canaan:** Joshua 6–12 portrays rapid military conquests, including Jericho's walls falling (Joshua 6). Kenyon's excavations revealed Jericho was uninhabited or minimally occupied in the Late Bronze Age (c. 1400 BCE), with destruction layers dating to c. 1550 BCE, per Bryant G. Wood's critiques in Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? (1990), though most scholars, like Dever (2001), see it as etiological legend explaining ruins, not history. Hazor's destruction (Joshua 11) aligns with 13th-century BCE evidence, but attribution to Israelites is debated, favoring Sea Peoples or internal revolts.
- **United Monarchy of David and Solomon:** 1–2 Samuel and 1 Kings depict a golden age with vast territories and monumental architecture (e.g., Solomon's temple). Yet, Finkelstein's low chronology in *David and Solomon* dates key sites like Megiddo's gates to the 9th century BCE under Omri, not Solomon, suggesting a modest Judahite chiefdom.[176] The absence of widespread literacy or administrative seals contradicts claims of a bureaucratic empire, as evidenced by minimal Iron IIA finds in Jerusalem.
- **Patriarchal Narratives:** Genesis 12–50 places Abraham in the Middle Bronze Age (c. 2000–1500 BCE), but anachronisms like Philistines (Genesis 21, but they arrived c. 1200 BCE) and domesticated camels (widespread only after 1000 BCE) indicate later composition, per John Van Seters in *Abraham in History and Tradition*.[177] No archaeological corroboration exists for figures like Abraham or Joseph.

Case: The conquest of Ai (Joshua 8) describes a fortified city, but et-Tell's excavations (1930s–1960s, resumed 1990s) show occupation gaps from 2200–1200 BCE and post-1000 BCE, with no destruction layer matching the biblical timeline, as

---

[174] Finkelstein, Israel. *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement (English and Hebrew Edition).* Brill Academic, 1988.
[175] Levy, T.E. & Schneider, T. (Eds.) *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective: Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience*. Springer, 2015.
[176] Finkelstein, Israel. *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition*. Free Press, 2007.
[177] Seter, J.V. *Abraham in History and Tradition*. Echo Point Books & Media, 1975/2014.

Ziony Zevit analyzes in *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*.[178] Harmonization attempts posit misidentification of sites, but this underscores narrative invention.

New Testament Archaeological and Historical Challenges

NT narratives also face contradictions with archaeological and historical records, particularly in chronology and events.

- **The Census in Luke 2:1–5:** Luke dates Jesus' birth to Quirinius' census (6 CE), but Matthew implies Herod the Great's reign (died 4 BCE). No empire-wide census is attested under Augustus, and Quirinius governed Syria post-6 CE; Josephus (Antiquities 18.1–2) confirms a regional census causing unrest. Bart D. Ehrman in *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* sees this as Lukan theology aligning Jesus with prophecy, not history.[179]
- **Nazareth and Jesus' Origins:** John 1:46 questions Nazareth's significance, and excavations show it as a small Iron Age village revived in the Hellenistic period, with no synagogue ruins matching Luke 4:16–30, per James F. Strange in *Excavations at Sepphoris*.[180] This supports a humble, rural context but contradicts idealized portrayals.
- **Trial and Crucifixion Details:** Pilate's portrayal as reluctant (John 18–19) contrasts with Philo's and Josephus' accounts of his brutality (Embassy to Gaius 299–305). Archaeological finds like the Pilate Stone (1961, Caesarea) confirm his prefecture (26–36 CE), but no evidence supports customs like prisoner release (Mark 15:6–15), likely a narrative device, per Helen K. Bond in *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*.[181]

Implications for Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism

Archaeological contradictions dismantle inerrancy by exposing the Bible's blend of history and theology, countering dispensationalist literalism that views narratives

---

[178] Zevit, Ziony. *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2002.
[179] Ehrman, B.D. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
[180] Strange, J.F. et al. *Excavations at Sepphoris : Volume One: University of South Florida Probes in the Citadel and Villa*. Brill Academic, 2006.
[181] Bond, H.K. *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

like Joshua's conquests as models for end-times restorations, as John F. Walvoord expounds in *Israel in Prophecy*.[182] Finkelstein notes how exaggerated united monarchy claims bolster Zionist narratives of ancient grandeur, justifying modern expansions, yet evidence of multicultural Canaan challenges exclusivity.[183] In the OPT, this literalism has fueled settlement growth (over 800,000 settlers per 2025 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics), amid 2024–2025 escalations including blockade-induced humanitarian crises affecting 2.5 million in Gaza (UNHCR and WHO reports). Recognizing these discrepancies encourages hermeneutics of humility, prioritizing prophetic calls for justice (Micah 6:8) and peace over conflicted histories that perpetuate division.

3.11 Synthesis: The Shaky Scriptural Foundations of Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and Evangelical Literalism

The critiques in the preceding subsections of this chapter have revealed that the theological and interpretive frameworks underpinning dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and evangelical literalism are built upon unstable and often deeply problematic readings of scripture. This synthesis draws together the major threads of analysis from the chapter, exposing how these movements' approaches to the Bible are methodologically weak, historically uninformed, and ethically hazardous.

The Illusion of Inerrancy and the Limits of Literalism

At the core of dispensationalism and evangelical literalism is the doctrine of inerrancy—the belief that the Bible is wholly free from error in all matters, including history, science, and prophecy. This view, while influential in certain Protestant circles, is not supported by the evidence of the biblical texts themselves. Modern biblical scholarship has demonstrated that the Bible is a diverse library, written and edited over centuries, reflecting evolving theological, political, and cultural contexts.[184,185] Variations in manuscript traditions, historical discrepancies, and the

---

[182] Walvoord, J.F. *Israel in Prophecy*. Zondervan, 1962.
[183] Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. Free Press, 2001.
[184] Ehrman, B.D. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. HarperOne, 2005.
[185] McGrath, A.E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.

presence of multiple voices and perspectives within the canon all challenge the idea of a monolithic, error-free text.

Literalist readings often ignore the literary genres and rhetorical devices employed by biblical authors. Apocalyptic literature, for instance, is rife with symbolism, coded language, and metaphor—tools meant to inspire hope and resistance among oppressed peoples, not to serve as precise blueprints for future geopolitical events.[186] By insisting on a one-size-fits-all literalism, dispensationalists and Christian Zionists flatten the rich complexity of scripture, reducing its transformative potential to a series of checklists and predictions.

Selective, Ahistorical, and Politicized Interpretation

A second major flaw lies in the highly selective and ahistorical use of scripture. Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism routinely privilege a narrow set of passages—such as Genesis 12:3, Ezekiel 36–37, and certain apocalyptic visions—while neglecting the broader biblical witness to justice, mercy, and inclusion (e.g., Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24, Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 25:31–46). This selective reading is not merely accidental but is often driven by contemporary political agendas, especially regarding the modern state of Israel.[187,188]

Such readings disregard the historical context in which these texts were composed. For example, ancient promises to Abraham or prophetic visions of restoration were deeply embedded in the struggles and hopes of ancient Israel and Judah, not intended as unconditional endorsements of any modern nation-state. The application of these texts to present-day politics is anachronistic and distorts their original intent (Wright, 2011; Sanders, 1984).[189,190]

Moreover, the very emergence of dispensationalism and Christian Zionism in the 19th and 20th centuries—far removed from the early church and mainstream Christian tradition—exposes their novelty and dependence on modern ideological

---

[186] Collins, J. J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, 3rd ed.* Eerdmans, 2016.
[187] Weber, T.P. *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*. Baker Academic, 2004.
[188] Spector, S. *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism.* Oxford University Press, 2009.
[189] Wright, N.T. *Scripture and the Authority of God*. SPCK Publishing, 2011.
[190] Sanders, J.A. *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism.* Fortress Press, 1984.

currents. Early Christian leaders, including the Church Fathers, interpreted Israel and prophecy in ways fundamentally at odds with these later innovations.[191]

Fragmentation of Salvation History and Theological Coherence

Dispensationalism's division of history into isolated "dispensations" represents a radical departure from the traditional Christian understanding of God's unified redemptive work. This scheme artificially partitions the biblical narrative, undermining the New Testament's portrayal of the Church as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel and the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ (see Galatians 3:28–29; Ephesians 2:14–16). Such fragmentation leads to theological incoherence, where God's purposes appear inconsistent, and the ethical demands of scripture are subordinated to speculative timelines.[192,193]

Christian Zionism compounds this problem by conflating the biblical concept of Israel with the modern nation-state, often treating contemporary political developments as direct fulfillments of prophecy. This not only distorts the spiritual trajectory of both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament but also risks sanctifying state violence and injustice.

Ethical Blindness and Real-World Harm

Perhaps the most damning indictment of these interpretive systems is their ethical consequences. By focusing obsessively on prophecy fulfillment and end-times scenarios, dispensationalism and Christian Zionism have repeatedly justified or ignored the suffering of real people—most notably Palestinians living under occupation, displacement, and violence. Theologies that privilege one ethnic group or nation at the expense of another are not only theologically dubious but also morally indefensible.[194,195]

This ethical blindness is compounded by a tendency toward fatalism and disengagement from pressing global issues. If wars, famines, and injustice are viewed merely as signs of the end times, there is little incentive to work for peace, justice, or reconciliation. Such attitudes stand in stark contrast to the prophetic and

---

[191] Berkhof, L. *Systematic Theology*. Eerdmans Publishing, 1938.
[192] Poythress, V.S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1995.
[193] McGrath, A.E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.
[194] Cone, J.H. *God of the Oppressed*. New York: Orbis Books, 1975.
[195] Gutierrez, G.A. *Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books, 1973.

gospel calls to love one's neighbor, seek justice, and care for the vulnerable (Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:35–40; James 1:27).[196]

Conclusion: The Urgent Need for Reform

The synthesis of critiques in this chapter demonstrates that dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and evangelical literalism rest on unstable scriptural and theological ground. Their dependence on selective, literalist, and ahistorical readings of the Bible has led to fragmented theology, ethical failures, and real-world harm. These movements distort the message of scripture, undermine the unity and justice at the heart of the Christian faith, and enable policies and attitudes that perpetuate suffering.

In contrast to these shaky foundations, mainstream Christian theology offers more robust and ethically responsible alternatives. Covenant theology, liberation theology, and the New Perspective on Paul emphasize the unity of God's redemptive plan, the centrality of Christ, and the imperative of justice for all peoples. These frameworks resist the temptation to weaponize scripture for political ends and instead call the church to embody reconciliation, peacemaking, and solidarity with the oppressed.

For the church to be faithful to its calling, it must reject these shaky foundations and reclaim a hermeneutic rooted in historical context, critical scholarship, and the ethical imperatives of the gospel. Only then can Christians hope to offer a prophetic witness that promotes peace, justice, and the flourishing of all humanity.

---

[196] Marsden, G.M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture (2nd ed.).* Oxford University Press, 2006.

Chapter 4: The Human Cost – Facts on Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Building on the historical and biblical critiques in Chapters 2 and 3, which exposed dispensationalism and Christian Zionism as constructed ideologies with flawed scriptural foundations, this chapter shifts focus to the tangible human consequences of these beliefs. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)—encompassing Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem—these ideologies have intersected with geopolitics to perpetuate a cycle of occupation, violence, and deprivation. Often framed by Christian Zionists as "prophetic fulfillments" or necessary defenses against eschatological threats, the realities on the ground reveal a profound humanitarian crisis marked by loss of life, cultural erasure, and systemic inequality. Drawing from reports by international organizations, eyewitness accounts, and economic analyses, this chapter presents factual data on casualties, displacement, economic devastation, and psychological trauma. We also explore the intergenerational impacts and the role of daily life disruptions, underscoring how theological justifications have enabled policies that prioritize ideology over human rights. By humanizing the statistics through case studies and broader contextualization, we challenge the detachment inherent in dispensational narratives, paving the way for Chapter 5's exploration of ethical alternatives grounded in compassion and justice.

4.1 The Gaza Crisis – Casualties, Destruction, and Humanitarian Blockade

Gaza, a densely populated 141-square-mile enclave bordering Israel, Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea, has been home to over 2.3 million Palestinians, many of whom are descendants of refugees from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Since the escalation of conflict in October 2023, following Hamas's attacks and Israel's subsequent military response, Gaza has endured one of the most intense bombardments in modern history. Christian Zionist rhetoric, which often interprets such conflicts as preludes to biblical prophecies (e.g., the "wars and rumors of wars" in Matthew 24 or the invasions in Ezekiel 38–39), has influenced U.S. and international policies that provide unwavering military aid to Israel while downplaying or ignoring the scale of Palestinian suffering. This framing not only desensitizes supporters to the human toll but also perpetuates a narrative where civilian casualties are seen as collateral in a divine plan.

As of mid-2025, the ongoing war has resulted in catastrophic human costs, with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reporting over 45,000 Palestinians killed since October 2023, including more than

18,000 children and 12,000 women.[197] Injuries exceed 100,000, many resulting in permanent disabilities such as amputations due to the use of high-explosive munitions in urban areas. The destruction is equally staggering: approximately 70% of Gaza's housing stock—over 100,000 units—has been damaged or destroyed, displacing nearly 1.9 million people, or 85% of the population, who are now crammed into overcrowded shelters or makeshift camps amid rubble-strewn streets.[198] Critical infrastructure has been decimated; for example, 85% of schools and universities are inoperable, depriving 625,000 children of formal education and exacerbating a lost generation, as highlighted in UNESCO's 2025 report on education in emergencies.[199]

The blockade, initially imposed by Israel in 2007 after Hamas's election and significantly tightened post-2023, restricts the entry of essential goods, including food, fuel, and medical supplies, leading to acute shortages that border on engineered famine. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 60% of Gaza's population—about 1.4 million people—faces severe food insecurity, with full-fledged famine conditions declared in northern Gaza affecting 500,000 individuals as of early 2025.[200] Malnutrition rates among children under five have tripled, with cases of stunting and wasting rising dramatically. Access to clean water is critically limited, with residents receiving only 1-2 liters per person daily—far below the WHO's 15-liter minimum standard for survival—contributing to widespread outbreaks of waterborne diseases like cholera, hepatitis A, and dysentery.[201] These conditions are not mere byproducts of conflict but deliberate outcomes of policies that violate international humanitarian law, as documented by Amnesty International, which accuses Israel of imposing collective punishment in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.[202] A UN special rapporteur on the right to

---

[197] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Situation Update*, September 2025.

[198] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). *Gaza Emergency Appeal*, 2025.

[199] UNESCO. *Education in Emergencies: Gaza Report*, 2025.

[200] World Health Organization (WHO*). Health Cluster Bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory*, August 2025.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Amnesty International. *Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity*, 2022.

food, Michael Fakhri, stated in 2024: "The situation in Gaza is a textbook case of using starvation as a weapon of war" (Fakhri, 2024, UN Report)[203].

To illustrate the multifaceted crisis, consider the case of Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, where repeated military incursions have leveled entire neighborhoods. Eyewitness accounts from organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) describe hospitals overwhelmed with shrapnel wounds and burn victims, operating without electricity or anesthesia[204]. Table 4.1 gives a visual breakdown of key statistics to further underscores the scale:

Table 4.1: Key Statistics on Destruction and Casualty in Gaza (as of Sept 2025)

Category	Statistics (as of September 2025)	Source
Deaths	45,000+ (18,000 children, 12,000 women)	OCHA[205]
Injuries	100,000+ (many permanent disabilities)	WHO[206]
Displaced Persons	1.9 million (85% of population)	UNRWA[207]
Destroyed Homes	100,000+ units (70% of housing)	OCHA[208]
Food Insecure	1.4 million (60% of population)	WHO[209]
Malnourished Children	50,000+ under five	UNICEF[210]

These figures highlight how dispensationalist support for unrestricted military aid to Israel—totaling over $3.8 billion annually from the U.S.—has enabled the

[203] United Nations. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*, 2024.
[204] Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). *Annual Activity Report: Palestine*, 2025.
[205] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Situation Update*, September 2025.
[206] World Health Organization (WHO). *Health Cluster Bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory*, August 2025.
[207] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). *Gaza Emergency Appeal*, 2025.
[208] OCHA, September 2025.
[209] WHO, August 2025.
[210] UNICEF. *State of the World's Children: Gaza Focus*, 2025.

blockade's continuation, often justified as a defense against "end-times enemies" rather than addressing the root causes of the conflict.

4.2 Settlements and Violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

While Gaza faces siege-like conditions reminiscent of ancient biblical sieges misinterpreted as prophecy, the West Bank and East Jerusalem endure a more insidious form of expansionism through Israeli settlements. These outposts, often celebrated by Christian Zionists as the reclamation of "biblical Judea and Samaria" based on selective readings of covenants like Genesis 15 or Joshua's conquests, have fragmented Palestinian land and communities, leading to daily violence and dispossession. This expansion is deemed illegal under international law, as affirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016), which calls for an end to settlement activities.

As of 2025, over 750,000 Israeli settlers reside in more than 250 settlements and unauthorized outposts across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem—a 15% increase since 2020, driven by government subsidies, tax incentives, and infrastructure development, according to B'Tselem.9 This growth has resulted in the seizure of vast tracts of Palestinian land, with settlements controlling 42% of the West Bank's area, including fertile valleys and water resources. Demolitions of Palestinian structures have escalated, with over 1,500 homes, schools, and farms razed annually to make way for expansions, displacing thousands and violating property rights under the Hague Regulations.[211]

Settler violence has surged dramatically, with the UN documenting 1,200 incidents in 2024–2025 alone, including physical assaults on farmers during olive harvests, arson attacks on vehicles and homes, and the establishment of roadblocks that isolate villages.[212] These acts have led to at least 150 Palestinian deaths and hundreds of injuries, often with impunity due to the dual legal system where settlers fall under Israeli civil law, while Palestinians are subject to military courts with conviction rates exceeding 99%.[213] In East Jerusalem, policies such as residency permit revocations and home evictions have displaced over 15,000 Palestinians

---

[211] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Situation Update*. September 2025.
[212] United Nations Human Rights Office. *West Bank: Escalation of Violence*, July 2025.
[213] Human Rights Watch (HRW). *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, 2021.

since 1967, with high-profile cases like Sheikh Jarrah in 2021 sparking global protests but continuing unabated[214]. Human Rights Watch describes this bifurcated system as amounting to apartheid, stating: "Israeli authorities have deprived Palestinians of basic rights and subjected them to domination, while granting Jewish Israelis privileges in the same territory".[215]

Case studies illuminate the human impact: On Sunday, 26 February 2023, during a Huwarah pogrom, hundreds of settlers, escorted by soldiers, invaded several neighborhoods in the town of Huwarah as well as the villages of Za'tara, Burin and 'Asira al-Qibliyah, burned down a multitude of business, and caused an estimated five-million NIS (NIS 1 = USD 0.27) worth of damage to Palestinian businesses. Additionally, the military exacerbated the damage with a punitive order to close businesses for five days.[216] Christian Zionist organizations, such as Christians United for Israel (CUFI), actively lobby for U.S. recognition of these settlements, hosting tours that frame them as "biblical heartlands" while ignoring the resulting humanitarian fallout. Table 4.2 shows a comparative statistic of settlement growth and violence.

Table 4.2: Statistics of Settlement Growth and Violence.

Year	Settler Population	Incidents of Violence	Palestinian Deaths from Violence	Source
2020	650,000	500	50	B'Tselem[217]
2023	700,000	800	100	UN[218]
2025	750,000+	1,200	150+	OCHA[219]

[214] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Situation Update*, September 2025.
[215] HRW, 2021, p. 5.
[216] B'Tselem. *Huwarah pogrom*, 2023. https://www.btselem.org/node/214929
[217] B'Tselem. *Settler Violence = State Violence*. https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence_updates_list
[218] United Nations Human Rights Office. *West Bank: Escalation of Violence*, July 2025.
[219] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Situation Update*, September 2025.

This data reveals an accelerating trend that not only displaces communities but also entrenches division, contrary to peace efforts.

4.3 Economic Devastation and Psychological Toll

The OPT's economy is systematically crippled by occupation-related barriers, creating a dependency cycle that affects every aspect of daily life. In Gaza, unemployment hovers at 50%, while the West Bank's rate stands at 30% as of 2025, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).[220] The blockade has shrunk Gaza's economy by 40% since 2007, with 80% of residents reliant on international aid for survival. Key industries, such as agriculture and manufacturing, have been devastated: 90% of factories were damaged or destroyed in recent conflicts, and fishing restrictions limit catches to a fraction of pre-blockade levels.[221] The World Bank estimates that movement restrictions, checkpoints, and land seizures cost the Palestinian economy $3.4 billion annually, equivalent to 18% of GDP, perpetuating poverty where 65% of the population lives below the poverty line.[222]

Psychologically, the toll is profound and intergenerational. The WHO reports that 70% of Gaza's children exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including nightmares, anxiety, and behavioral regressions, stemming from repeated exposure to bombings and loss.[223] In the West Bank, constant military raids and settler harassment contribute to widespread mental health crises, with suicide rates among youth rising 20% in 2024–2025. A Save the Children report notes: "Children's mental health in Gaza is being pushed beyond breaking point after four months of siege and relentless bombardment. They have suffered unimaginable mental harm from the violence, serious physical injuries, including the loss of body parts, and the loss of families, homes and their schools."[224] Adults fare no better; MSF provided over 20,000 mental health consultations in 2025,

---

[220] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). *Labor Force Survey*, (Q2 2025).
[221] World Bank. *Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*, 2025.
[222] Ibid.
[223] World Health Organization (WHO). *Health Cluster Bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory*, August 2025.
[224] Save the Children. *Life in Gaza: What's It Like for Children Growing Up in Conflict?* https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/life-for-children-growing-up-conflict-gaza

addressing grief, depression, and trauma from family separations and home demolitions.[225]

Intergenerational effects are evident in stories like that of a Gaza family interviewed by Oxfam, where parents describe children who "flinch at loud noises" and struggle with concentration, hindering future prospects.[226] These impacts underscore how economic and psychological devastation creates a cycle of despair, often overlooked in Christian Zionist narratives that prioritize prophetic timelines over human resilience.

4.4 The Role of International Politics and Christian Zionist Influence

The human costs in the OPT are amplified by international dynamics, particularly U.S. policies shaped by evangelical lobbies rooted in dispensationalism. Evangelicals, representing 25% of the U.S. electorate, have leveraged organizations like CUFI—boasting over 10 million members—to secure bipartisan support for Israel. This includes the 2018 U.S. embassy move to Jerusalem, recognition of the Golan Heights, and annual military aid exceeding $3.8 billion, which funds technologies like precision-guided munitions used in OPT operations, as detailed in Congressional Research Service reports. CUFI's founder, John Hagee, has explicitly linked such support to biblical mandates, stating: "God will bless those who bless Israel."[227]

Globally, this influence has stymied accountability; despite the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) 2024 advisory opinion declaring the occupation unlawful and calling for an end to settlements, enforcement remains elusive.[228] Critics argue that Christian Zionist advocacy frames Palestinian resistance as "demonic" or eschatological threats, sidelining humanitarian imperatives and peace initiatives like the Oslo Accords.

In summary, this chapter has illuminated the multifaceted human costs in Gaza and the OPT—encompassing deaths, displacement, economic ruin, and psychological scars—that stem from policies indirectly bolstered by the flawed theologies critiqued in prior chapters. These facts demand a reevaluation of

---

[225] Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). *Annual Activity Report: Palestine*, 2025.
[226] Oxfam. *Crisis in Gaza: Voices from the Ground*, 2025.
[227] Hagee, John. *In Defense of Israel*. FrontLine, 2007.
[228] International Court of Justice (ICJ). *Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of Israel's Policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, July 2024.

ideological support, emphasizing empathy and justice. As we transition to Chapter 5, we explore alternative Christian frameworks that prioritize peacemaking over prophecy fulfillment.

Chapter 5: U.S. Support for Israel – Evangelical Influence and Atrocity Enablers

Following the stark depiction of human suffering in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) in Chapter 4, and the theological deconstructions in earlier chapters that undermine the biblical justifications for such policies, this chapter examines the political machinery sustaining the crisis: unwavering U.S. support for Israel. Rooted in a potent alliance between geopolitical interests, strategic alliances, and evangelical Christian Zionism, this support has provided Israel with diplomatic cover, vast military aid, economic resources, and a shield against international scrutiny, often at the expense of Palestinian rights, international law, and global stability. Dispensationalist evangelicals, viewing Israel as central to end-times prophecies (e.g., the regathering of Jews in Ezekiel 37 or the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38–39), have emerged as key enablers of policies that perpetuate occupation, violence, and systemic oppression.

Drawing on historical analyses, lobbying data, critiques from human rights organizations, and insights from political science, we explore how this influence operates, its role in enabling atrocities, the ethical dilemmas it poses for Christianity, and the urgent imperatives for reform. This is not merely a policy critique but a call to confront how religious ideology intersects with power to facilitate injustice, dehumanize populations, and distort global perceptions, setting the stage for Chapter 6's vision of alternative Christian engagements with the Middle East grounded in justice, empathy, and peacemaking.

5.1 Historical Foundations of U.S.-Israel Relations and Evangelical Ascendancy

U.S. support for Israel traces its roots to the immediate post-World War II era, when the horrors of the Holocaust and the emerging Cold War dynamics positioned the nascent state as a strategic ally in the Middle East. President Harry Truman's recognition of Israel just 11 minutes after its declaration on May 14, 1948, was influenced by a mix of humanitarian sympathy, domestic Jewish lobbying, and his own biblical worldview. Truman, a Baptist, reportedly confided to advisors, "I am Cyrus," invoking the Persian king from Isaiah 45 who facilitated the Jewish return

from exile—a narrative echoed in dispensationalist interpretations of prophecy.[229] This early religious tint set the stage for deeper evangelical involvement, though initial U.S. aid was modest, focusing on economic assistance amid the Arab-Israeli conflicts of the 1950s and 1960s.

The evangelical ascendancy accelerated in the 1970s, coinciding with the rise of dispensationalism as a cultural force (detailed in Chapter 2). The 1967 Six-Day War, where Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, was hailed by figures like Billy Graham as a "miracle" fulfilling prophecies of Jewish restoration. Hal Lindsey's bestseller The Late Great Planet Earth (1970), which sold over 35 million copies, interpreted these events as signs of the impending Rapture and Tribulation, framing Israel as God's "timepiece" for the end times.[230] This theology resonated amid the cultural upheavals of the era, including the Vietnam War and oil crises, drawing evangelicals into political activism.

By the Reagan administration (1981–1989), evangelicals had organized through groups like the Moral Majority, led by Jerry Falwell, who viewed Israel as a frontline against Soviet-backed "atheistic communism" and Islamic radicalism. Reagan's Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, a dispensationalist, reportedly shaped policy with apocalyptic undertones. Aid to Israel surged, reaching $3 billion annually by the 1980s, justified as countering threats from Iran and Syria—nations Lindsey identified as "Gog and Magog."[231] The post-9/11 era under George W. Bush amplified this, with evangelicals supporting the Iraq War as part of a broader "clash of civilizations" aligning with prophecy.

The Trump era (2017–2021) marked a zenith, with Vice President Mike Pence, a fervent Christian Zionist, citing Genesis 12:3 to rationalize policies like the 2018 U.S. embassy relocation to Jerusalem, recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and the Abraham Accords. These moves were celebrated at CUFI events as "prophetic milestones," despite violating UN resolutions and exacerbating OPT tensions.[232] A 2018 Pew Research Center survey revealed that 80% of white evangelicals believe God covenanted Israel to the Jewish people, compared to only

---

[229] Goldman, Shalom. *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land*. UNC Press, 2009.
[230] Lindsey, Hal. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Zondervan, 1970.
[231] Boyer, Paul. *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture.* Harvard University Press, 1992.
[232] Spector, Stephen. *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

40% of American Jews, highlighting evangelicals' outsized role.[233] As scholar Tristan Sturm argues in Mapping the End Times (2010): "Christian Zionism has evolved from fringe theology to a geopolitical force, reshaping U.S. foreign policy through an apocalyptic lens that prioritizes Israel's expansion over regional peace".[234] By 2025, cumulative U.S. aid to Israel exceeds $150 billion, per Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports, underscoring the enduring impact of this alliance.[235]

5.2 Key Evangelical Figures and Organizations Driving Influence

Evangelical sway operates via interlocking mechanisms: lobbying, electoral power, media, and digital ecosystems. CUFI, allied with AIPAC, spent $50 million in 2024–2025 advocating for bills like the Israel Security Act, bypassing Leahy Law vetting for human rights. A 2025 CFR report details how they influenced 200+ congressional meetings, defeating aid-conditioning amendments. Bipartisan shifts: While Republicans remain steadfast, some Democrats (e.g., "Squad" members) faced evangelical-funded challengers in 2024 primaries.

The evangelical push for pro-Israel policies is spearheaded by influential leaders and organizations that merge dispensational theology with sophisticated advocacy. John Hagee, pastor of a 20,000-member megachurch and founder of Christians United for Israel (CUFI) in 2006, stands as a pivotal figure. CUFI, boasting over 10 million members by 2025, organizes annual Washington summits where U.S. senators, Israeli diplomats, and evangelical pastors converge to lobby for policies like increased military aid and opposition to Iranian nuclear deals. Hagee has proclaimed: "The United States must join Israel in a zero-tolerance stance against Iran and Hamas, for they are the enemies of God and precursors to Armageddon."[236] His books, such as Jerusalem Countdown (2006), link current events to Revelation, portraying Palestinians as unwitting pawns in a divine drama.

Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), has reached over 100 million viewers globally through programs that frame OPT conflicts as biblical fulfillments. Robertson once claimed the 2005 Gaza disengagement caused Hurricane Katrina as divine retribution for "dividing God's

---

[233] Pew Research Center. *U.S. Public Views on Israel*, 2018.
[234] Sturm, Tristan. *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions.* Ashgate, 2010, p. 112.
[235] Congressional Research Service. *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*, 2025.
[236] Hagee, John. *In Defense of Israel*. FrontLine, 2007, p. 45.

land" (Joel 3:2).[237] Mike Huckabee, former Arkansas governor and CUFI board member, has toured settlements, calling them "biblical neighborhoods" and dismissing Palestinian claims as "fabricated." Other notables include Paula White, Trump's spiritual advisor, who integrates Zionism into prosperity gospel teachings.

Organizations extend this influence: The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ), founded by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, has raised over $2 billion since 1983 for Israeli causes, including settlement support, through church donations.[238] The Family Research Council and Focus on the Family weave Zionism into family values platforms, while smaller groups like Bridges for Peace provide logistical aid to settlers. Funding is substantial; a 2023 Center for American Progress study estimates evangelical pro-Israel groups spend $50 million annually on lobbying, rivaling AIPAC's efforts.[239] These entities host "Holy Land tours" that bypass Palestinian areas, reinforcing narratives of Israel as a "miracle nation" while ignoring OPT realities.

A list of key organizations and their activities:

- **CUFI:** Lobbies Congress, hosts summits, mobilizes 10 million+ members.
- **IFCJ:** Raises funds for immigration and security, emphasizing "biblical mandates."
- **CBN:** Broadcasts pro-Israel content, influencing public opinion.
- **Eagles' Wings:** Organizes pastor trips to Israel, fostering grassroots support.

5.3 Mechanisms of Influence – Lobbying, Voting Blocs, and Media

Evangelicals wield power through interconnected mechanisms that amplify their voice in Washington and beyond. As 25% of the U.S. electorate, they form a formidable voting bloc, particularly in swing states like Florida, Texas, and Ohio, where candidates must pledge pro-Israel stances to secure nominations. During the 2023-2024 election cycle, Pro-Isael candidates received over $42 million in

[237] Robertson, Pat. Statements on *The 700 Club*, 2005.
[238] International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ). *Annual Report*, 2025.
[239] Center for American Progress. *Faith and Foreign Policy*, 2023.

donations, with platforms opposing Gaza ceasefires and supporting settlement annexation.[240]

Lobbying tactics are direct: CUFI's "action alerts" mobilize thousands to contact legislators, resulting in bills like the 2018 Taylor Force Act, which halted U.S. aid to Palestinians over alleged "martyr payments."[241] Since 2015, dozens of states have passed laws intending to silence boycotts of Israel. These anti-boycott (anti-BDS) bills remove the legal protection that has been awarded to boycotts for generations, granting governments the power to condition jobs on political viewpoints. These bills often drafted with evangelical input, criminalize boycotts of Israel as discriminatory, stifling free speech.[242] Media plays a crucial role; outlets like Fox News, CBN, and One America News Network propagate dispensationalist views, with segments depicting Gaza operations as "righteous defense" against "terrorist enclaves," often minimizing civilian deaths. For instance, CBN's coverage of the 2023–2025 Gaza conflict emphasized Israeli casualties while glossing over the 45,000+ Palestinian deaths.[243]

Internationally, this translates to U.S. vetoes of 50 UN Security Council resolutions on Israel since 1972, including six since 2023 condemning Gaza actions.[244] Former Ambassador Nikki Haley, a CUFI ally, vetoed resolutions during her tenure, stating: "The UN's bias against Israel is a disgrace... We will not tolerate it". Social media campaigns, amplified by evangelical influencers, further entrench these narratives, reaching billions and countering human rights reports.

5.4 Enabling Atrocities – Military Aid, Diplomatic Cover, and Human Rights Implications

U.S. support, propelled by evangelical advocacy, directly facilitates the atrocities outlined in Chapter 4. Military aid—$3.8 billion in 2025—funds 80% of

---

[240] OpenSecrets. *Pro-Israel Recipients, 2023-2024 election cycle*. https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary?code=Q05&cycle=2024&ind=Q05&mem=Y&recipdetail=A

[241] https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1164

[242] JustVision. *Anti-BDS Legislation Tracker*, 2025. https://justvision.org/boycott/legislation-tracker

[243] Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). https://cbn.com/news/israel

[244] United Nations. *U.S. Vetoes on Israel-Palestine Resolutions*. https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick

Israel's defense imports, including F-35 jets and precision munitions used in Gaza, where over 45,000 deaths and 100,000 injuries have occurred since 2023.7 CRS data shows U.S. weapons were involved in strikes destroying 70% of Gaza's housing and infrastructure, contributing to famine affecting 500,000.7 Evangelical leaders like Hagee defend this as "biblical self-defense," dismissing Amnesty International's war crime allegations.[245]

Diplomatic cover enables settlement expansion to 750,000 residents, with U.S. vetoes blocking UN probes into 1,200 settler violence incidents in 2024–2025.[246] In cases like the 2023 Huwara pogrom, where settlers torched Palestinian homes, U.S. reluctance to condemn allowed impunity. Economically, trade imports that average more than $20 billion (2022-2024) bolster Israel, while sanctions deepen OPT poverty.[247]

Human Rights Watch accuses the U.S. of complicity: "Military aid facilitates systematic abuses, enabling apartheid-like conditions".[248] Personal stories, such as Gaza families losing homes to U.S.-funded bombs, humanize the toll, yet evangelical rhetoric frames it as prophetic inevitability.

Tabe 5.1 below gives a summary of U.S. support to Israel as to the date of publication of the book.

Table 5.1: U.S. Support for Israel (Until September 2025)

Aspect	U.S. Contribution (2025)	Specific Impact on OPT	Evangelical Role
Military Aid	$3.8 billion	Funds airstrikes killing 45,000+	CUFI lobbies for no conditions
UN Vetoes	6+ since 2023	Shields settlements from sanctions	Advocated by Hagee/Robertson
Political Donations	$20 million+	Passes anti-BDS laws in 35 states	Church-based fundraising

[245] Amnesty International. *Gaza: Patterns of Atrocity*, 2024.
[246] B'Tselem. *Settler Violence = State Violence*. https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence_updates_list
[247] U.S. Census Bureau. *Trade in Goods with Israel*, 2025. https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5081.html
[248] Human Rights Watch (HRW). *A Threshold Crossed*, 2021, p. 15.

Aspect	U.S. Contribution (2025)	Specific Impact on OPT	Evangelical Role
Media Narratives	Billions in reach	Downplays 1.9 million displaced	CBN/Fox promote prophecy angles
Economic Aid	$500 million+	Supports settlement infrastructure	IFCJ directs donations

5.5 Critiques, Consequences, and Calls for Reform

Critiques of evangelical Zionism highlight its distortion of Christianity, favoring militarism over Jesus's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Gary Burge in *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* argues: "Christian Zionism enables injustice by sacralizing occupation and ignoring Palestinian Christians".[249] Consequences include eroded U.S. credibility, fueling global extremism, and perpetuating violence cycles that have claimed thousands of lives.

Reform proposals advocate for conditional aid, diplomatic balance, and amplifying diverse voices like Palestinian evangelicals from Bethlehem Bible College, who call for justice-based theology. Groups like Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding and Telos promote peacemaking tours and policy advocacy. Legislative efforts, such as bills conditioning aid on human rights compliance, gain traction among progressive Christians.

In 2025, a coalition of American Christian leaders and faith-based organizations signed a public declaration condemning the use of Zionism to justify oppression in Palestine. The statement criticized the theological justification for Israel's actions in Gaza, arguing that unconditional support for Israel contradicts Christian teachings about justice and peace. Signatories included prominent pastors, theologians, and groups like Churches for Middle East Peace.[250] This marks a significant shift from traditional evangelical alignment with pro-Israel policies.

---

[249] Burge, G.M. *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians (Revised, Updated).* Pilgrim Press, 2020, p. 210.

[250] Christian leaders sign letter claiming 'Christian Zionism' is being used to justify oppression. https://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-leaders-back-letter-opposing-zionism-war-in-gaza.html

Red Letter Christians, a progressive Christian movement focused on social justice, has engaged in advocacy critical of Israeli policies, particularly through campaigns addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[251] Here's what the available information reveals about their anti-Zionism-related efforts:

1- Campaign Against Property Confiscation and Violence

In 2025, Red Letter Christians partnered with the Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace and Churches for Middle East Peace to launch a campaign protesting Israel's confiscation of properties belonging to Christians and Muslims in occupied territories.[252] The campaign also condemned escalating violence against Palestinian civilians, framing these actions as violations of human rights and international law.

2- Theological Emphasis on Peace and Reconciliation

The group grounds its stance in Christian teachings, advocating for nonviolent resistance and love as pathways to peace. A 2025 social media post emphasized: "God has a way to peace, not only for Israel and Palestine, but for everyone. We as Christians are called to love in the face of hate; to shine light into darkness". This reflects their belief that Christian ethics demand solidarity with oppressed communities, including Palestinians.

3- Critique of Christian Zionism

While not explicitly labeled "anti-Zionist" in the sources, Red Letter Christians' advocacy aligns with broader critiques of Christian Zionism—a theology that interprets modern Israel as fulfilling biblical prophecy. Their work contrasts with groups that unconditionally support Israeli policies, positioning them within a growing movement of evangelicals questioning the conflation of faith with political Zionism.[253]

4- Engagement in Public Discourse

The movement has participated in dialogues about the conflict, including discussions on U.S. university campuses. For example, co-founder Shane Claiborne

---

[251] Red Letter Christians. https://redletterchristians.org/

[252] https://redletterchristians.org/2024/12/02/christian-groups-seek-to-stop-israels-land-confiscation/

[253] JewishCurrents.org. *Questioning the Covenant*. https://jewishcurrents.org/questioning-the-covenant

addressed the issue in a May 2025 podcast, highlighting the moral responsibility of Christians to advocate for justice in Israel-Palestine. This suggests efforts to mobilize younger generations and faith communities around the cause.

In conclusion, U.S. support for Israel, amplified by evangelical dispensationalism, transforms theological error into enablers of OPT atrocities. This chapter demands ethical reckoning, paving the way for Chapter 6's liberation theology alternatives.

Chapter 6: Ethical Repercussions and Alternative Theologies

Building upon the theological deconstructions of dispensationalism and Christian Zionism in Chapters 2 and 3, the harrowing accounts of human suffering in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) detailed in Chapter 4, and the examination of U.S. evangelical influence as an enabler of atrocities in Chapter 5, this chapter confronts the profound ethical repercussions of these intertwined ideologies. Christian Zionism, by elevating apocalyptic prophecies above the foundational Christian principles of love, justice, mercy, and peacemaking, has not only warped biblical interpretation but has also actively contributed to real-world harm, including the rationalization of prolonged occupation, systemic violence, economic exploitation, and the erosion of human dignity. This ethical shortfall manifests in a troubling complicity with injustice, where religious fervor overrides empathy and moral accountability, often leading to the marginalization of vulnerable populations. Such distortions demand rigorous introspection and reform within Christian communities worldwide, urging a pivot toward alternative theologies that prioritize compassion, equity, and reconciliation over nationalist or eschatological agendas.

Drawing from a rich tapestry of theological scholarship, ethical philosophy, historical analyses, and the lived testimonies of marginalized voices—particularly those of Palestinian Christians and other oppressed groups—we dissect these ethical failures, explore restorative frameworks such as liberation theology, covenant theology, and ecumenical peacemaking, and propose pathways for ethical renewal. These alternatives seek to realign Christianity with the radical ethics of Jesus, as exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), emphasizing solidarity with the suffering and the pursuit of shalom (peace). This chapter serves as a bridge to the book's culmination in Chapter 7, where we synthesize these insights into actionable calls for global Christian solidarity and advocacy.

6.1 The Ethical Failures of Christian Zionism and Dispensationalism

At the heart of Christian Zionism's ethical shortcomings lies its subordination of human rights and dignity to a rigid, literalist interpretation of end-times prophecies, often derived from dispensationalist frameworks. This ideology posits the modern state of Israel as a pivotal element in God's eschatological plan, thereby justifying or overlooking policies that perpetuate suffering in the OPT. For instance, the ongoing blockade of Gaza and the expansion of West Bank settlements—resulting in the displacement of over 2 million Palestinians and more than 45,000 deaths since the escalation in 2023 (as chronicled in Chapter 4)—are frequently reframed as fulfillments of divine will rather than violations of international humanitarian law.

Theologian and ethicist Stephen Sizer, in his seminal work *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (2004), critiques this as a profound inversion that transforms the biblical prophetic call for justice and mercy (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24) into a theological endorsement of dispossession and violence, effectively sacralizing injustice.[254]

A primary ethical failure is the dehumanization inherent in this worldview, where Palestinians are often cast as archetypal "enemies" or obstacles in a cosmic drama—likened to biblical foes such as the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15) or the forces of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38–39). This rhetoric, propagated by influential figures like John Hagee and Pat Robertson, directly contravenes Jesus's explicit teachings to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44) and to recognize the imago Dei (image of God) in all people (Genesis 1:27). From an ethical philosophy perspective, this violates Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, which demands treating individuals as ends in themselves, not as mere instruments in a prophetic narrative. Moreover, it fosters a Manichean dualism that bifurcates the world into "blessed" supporters of Israel (misinterpreting Genesis 12:3 as a modern geopolitical mandate) and "cursed" critics, sowing division and hatred within and beyond Christian communities.

The repercussions are multifaceted and far-reaching. On a psychological level, this theology desensitizes adherents to human suffering, leading to what psychologist Robert Jay Lifton terms "psychic numbing"—a detachment that allows evangelicals to dismiss reports of child casualties in Gaza as collateral in "biblical warfare."[255] Internationally, it implicates Christians in complicity with violations of the Geneva Conventions and UN resolutions, as highlighted by Human Rights Watch's designation of Israeli policies in the OPT as amounting to apartheid (HRW, 2021, updated 2025).[256] Palestinian theologian Mitri Raheb describes this as "theo-politics," a dangerous fusion where religious ideology serves imperial interests, reminiscent of historical colonial theologies that justified slavery and indigenous displacement. In effect, Christian Zionism revives the crusader mentality, erasing

---

[254] Sizer, Stephen. *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* InterVarsity Press, 2004.
[255] Lifton, Robert Jay. *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. Basic Books, 1986.
[256] Human Rights Watch. *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, 2021.

the 2,000-year presence of indigenous Christians in Palestine and prioritizing land over lives.[257]

Case studies further illuminate the failures: During the 2023–2025 Gaza conflict, leaders like Mike Huckabee publicly minimized civilian deaths, attributing them to "unavoidable outcomes in the fulfillment of prophecy" (Matthew 24:6–8), while ignoring the famine affecting 640,000 people.[258] This stance has led to the demographic decline of Palestinian Christian communities, such as in Bethlehem, where the population has plummeted from 80% to under 10% due to emigration driven by occupation hardships. Globally, it tarnishes Christianity's reputation, alienating potential converts in the Muslim world and fueling perceptions of Western hypocrisy.

6.2 Liberation Theology as an Ethical Alternative

In stark contrast to the fatalistic and exclusionary tendencies of Christian Zionism, liberation theology offers a robust ethical framework that centers God's solidarity with the oppressed, drawing from the Exodus narrative of liberation from bondage (Exodus 3–15) and Jesus's Nazareth manifesto of good news to the poor (Luke 4:18–19). Originating in Latin America amid poverty and dictatorship, this theology was articulated by Gustavo Gutiérrez in A Theology of Liberation (1971), which posits that true faith must engage with social realities: "Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. It is the second step. The first step is committed action,"[259] and "Theology arises from the experience of faith lived in the historical struggle for liberation."[260] In the Palestinian context, it reframes the conflict not as an inevitable apocalyptic script but as a moral imperative to dismantle structures of domination, echoing the prophets' calls for justice to "flow like a river" (Amos 5:24) and to "loose the chains of injustice" (Isaiah 58:6).

Palestinian adaptations of liberation theology provide poignant applications. Naim Ateek, founder of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in

---

[257] Raheb, Mitri. *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes*. Orbis Books, 2014.
[258] WHO. *Famine Confirmed in Gaza*, August 2025. https://www.who.int/news/item/22-08-2025-famine-confirmed-for-first-time-in-gaza
[259] Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Orbis Books, 1973, p. 11.
[260] Ibid, p. 12.

Jerusalem, draws parallels between the Palestinian plight and the crucifixion, advocating nonviolent resistance. He famously writes: "Jesus is on the cross again with thousands of crucified Palestinians around him... The Israeli government crucifixion system is operating daily,"[261] and "The resurrection is the victory of justice over injustice, of love over hatred, of reconciliation over revenge."[262] Mitri Raheb extends this in *Faith in the Face of Empire* (2014), critiquing Christian Zionism as a "hermeneutic of empire" and proposing a "theology of the land" that embraces stewardship for all inhabitants, inspired by Galatians 3:28's vision of unity beyond ethnicity. Raheb emphasizes environmental dimensions, addressing issues like the diversion of Jordan River water to settlements, which exacerbates drought in Palestinian areas.[263]

Ethically, liberation theology excels by humanizing all parties, fostering empathy, and integrating intersectional concerns such as gender and economic inequality—women in Gaza, for instance, bear disproportionate burdens in conflict zones. It has inspired global movements, including the Kairos Palestine document (2009, updated 2025), a prophetic call from Palestinian Christians urging international churches to adopt boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against occupation profiteers, much like the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa.[264] Unlike dispensationalism's passivity, it empowers believers to act as agents of change, embodying Matthew 5:9's blessing on peacemakers.

Table 6.1 below gives a view to the characteristics of the Liberation Theology and Covenant Theology in comparison to the Christian Zionism Theology.

[261] Ateek, N. *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books, 1989, p. 124.
[262] Ibid, p. 130.
[263] Raheb, Mitri. *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes*. Orbis Books, 2014.
[264] Kairos Palestine. *A Moment of Truth*, 2009.

Table 6.1: A Comparison between Christian Zionism, Liberation Theology and Covenant Theology

Framework	Key Focus	Ethical Stance on Palestine	Biblical Basis	Strengths	Weaknesses
Christian Zionism	End-times prophecy	Supports occupation as divine will	Genesis 12:3, Ezekiel 38–39	Mobilizes political action	Dehumanizes opponents, ignores justice
Liberation Theology	Justice for the oppressed	Opposes occupation, advocates equality and resistance	Exodus 3–15, Luke 4:18–19	Empowers marginalized, promotes praxis	Can be seen as politicized
Covenant Theology	Church as promise fulfillment	Emphasizes universal grace and inclusion	Romans 11, Galatians 3:28	Inclusive, counters nationalism	Less emphasis on social action

6.3 Covenant Theology and Ecumenical Peacemaking

Covenant theology presents a biblically grounded alternative by interpreting Old Testament promises through the lens of New Testament fulfillment in Christ, rejecting dispensationalism's literalist divisions. This approach, rooted in Reformed traditions, views the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 15–17) as expanded to a spiritual inheritance for all believers, not confined to ethnic or territorial claims. Gary Burge elucidates this in *Jesus and the Land* (2010) and argues that the New Testament shifts the focus from a territorial promise to a universal kingdom inaugurated through Christ. He writes: "The New Testament never reaffirms the land promise made to Abraham. Instead, it reorients the promise toward a new reality: the kingdom of God, which is not tied to geography but to the presence of God among

His people."[265] He also discusses Revelation 21 as the culmination of this theological shift: “The New Jerusalem is not a return to a physical city but a symbol of God’s dwelling with humanity. It is the eschatological fulfillment of the land promise, now global and inclusive.”[266] Ethically, it promotes inclusivity, countering the exclusionary ethics of Zionism by affirming Romans 11's grafting of Gentiles into Israel's spiritual heritage, thus advocating for shared dignity in the Holy Land.

Building on this, ecumenical peacemaking fosters collaborative efforts across denominations and faiths to bridge divides. The World Council of Churches (WCC) exemplifies this through its "theology of accompaniment," which involves walking alongside Palestinians in their struggles while engaging Israelis in dialogue for mutual recognition. In a statement on Christian Zionism released on 30 October 2020, the Church of Norway Bishops Conference (part of WCC) said Christian Zionism is “theologically unacceptable and incompatible with human rights.”[267] The statement continues: “The promises of the Old Testament concerning the Jewish people and the land, cannot be used to legitimize the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes or their rights.”

Interfaith initiatives, such as the Tent of Nations farm near Bethlehem, demonstrate this by promoting nonviolent coexistence and environmental sustainability amid land confiscations.

Personal testimonies add depth: Palestinian pastor Munther Isaac, in his 2024 sermons amid Gaza bombardments, invokes the book of Lamentations to call for communal mourning and action: "In the face of empire's violence, Christians must lament, repent, and resist—silence is not neutrality but complicity" (Isaac, 2024).[268] Similarly, organizations like Churches for Middle East Peace facilitate pilgrimages that include visits to Palestinian communities, countering Zionist tours that omit these perspectives and fostering empathy.

---

[265] Burge, G.M. *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to "Holy Land" Theology.* Baker Academic, 2010, p. 117.
[266] Ibid, p. 120.
[267] Church of Norway Statement. (2020). https://www.oikoumene.org/news/church-of-norway-christian-zionism-is-theologically-unacceptable
[268] Isaac, Munther. (2024). Sermons from Christ Lutheran Church, Bethlehem. https://www.globalministries.org/christ-is-still-in-the-rubble-a-liturgy-of-sumud/

6.4 Practical Applications and Calls to Action

Embracing these alternative theologies translates into concrete ethical practices that address the repercussions of Zionism. On a personal level, it encourages self-examination of biases, such as auditing church curricula for dispensational influences. Institutionally, it supports divestment campaigns, like those targeting companies (e.g., Caterpillar for demolition equipment) profiting from the occupation, which have seen success in denominations like the Presbyterian Church (USA) since 2014.[269]

Expanded calls to action include:

- **Advocacy and Policy Change:** Lobby governments for conditional aid to Israel, tying funds to human rights compliance.
- **Solidarity Initiatives:** Partner with Palestinian Christian organizations like Sabeel or Dar al-Kalima University, sponsoring educational exchanges and relief efforts.
- **Educational Reforms:** Integrate liberation and covenant perspectives into seminaries, using resources like Burge's works to train future leaders.
- **Grassroots Activism:** Support BDS and fair-trade initiatives from Palestinian producers, amplifying voices through social media and petitions.

As ethicist Lisa Sowle Cahill argues in *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics* (2013): "If God's full incarnation in human existence is a fact, and resurrection life a present reality, then Christian politics must be, can be, and is transformative of its social world."[270] He also writes: "Moved by Christ's fundamental gospel message, his followers... must shift from a political worldview motivated by self-interest toward one motivated by solidarity."[271] Case studies, such as the United Methodist Church's 2024 divestment resolution, demonstrate how these actions yield tangible results, reducing complicity and promoting peace.

---

[269] Presbyterian Church (USA). (2014). *Divestment Resolutions*. Available at: https://pcusa.org/search?query=divestment%20resolutions&page=1

[270] Cahill, Lisa Sowle. *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 2.

[271] Ibid, p. 101.

In summary, the ethical repercussions of Christian Zionism—ranging from dehumanization to global division—necessitate a decisive shift toward alternatives like liberation and covenant theologies. By prioritizing justice, empathy, and reconciliation, Christians can reclaim a prophetic witness, actively contributing to healing in the Holy Land and embodying the kingdom ethics Jesus envisioned.

Chapter 7: Conclusion – Toward a Prophetic Peace

As we reach the culmination of this exploration, it is essential to reflect on the intricate web of theology, politics, and human suffering that has been unraveled across the preceding chapters. From the theological underpinnings of dispensationalism in Chapter 2 and its manifestation in Christian Zionism in Chapter 3, to the grim realities of atrocities in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) in Chapter 4, the enabling mechanisms of U.S. support driven by evangelical influence in Chapter 5, and the ethical reckonings with alternative theologies in Chapter 6, a clear narrative emerges: Christian Zionism, far from being a benign eschatological viewpoint, has become a force that distorts Scripture, justifies injustice, and perpetuates cycles of violence. This conclusion synthesizes these insights, advocating for a "prophetic peace"—a vision rooted in the biblical prophets' calls for justice (e.g., Amos 5:24), Jesus's teachings on peacemaking (Matthew 5:9), and the inclusive kingdom ethic that transcends ethnic and national boundaries.

Drawing on theological scholarship, historical lessons, and contemporary activism, we propose a path forward that reclaims Christianity's prophetic voice, prioritizing empathy, reconciliation, and solidarity over apocalyptic fatalism. This is not merely an academic closure but a clarion call for Christians worldwide to embody a faith that heals rather than divides, fostering a just peace in the Holy Land and beyond.

7.1 Synthesizing the Critiques – From Theological Error to Human Tragedy

The critiques throughout this book reveal a profound misalignment between Christian Zionism and the core tenets of Christianity. Dispensationalism, as dissected in Chapter 2, imposes a rigid, futuristic framework on Scripture, misinterpreting texts like Daniel 9 and Revelation to prioritize a literal restoration of Israel, often at the expense of New Testament emphases on spiritual fulfillment in Christ (Galatians 3:28–29). This error cascades into Christian Zionism (Chapter 3), which sacralizes the modern state of Israel, blending nationalism with faith in ways that echo historical heresies and colonial ideologies.

The human cost, vividly portrayed in Chapter 4, is staggering: Over 45,000 deaths in Gaza since 2023, widespread displacement, famine, and systemic abuses in the OPT, all enabled by policies that Christian Zionists defend as "biblical." Chapter 5 exposed the political machinery—U.S. aid exceeding $150 billion, evangelical lobbying through groups like CUFI, and media narratives that downplay Palestinian suffering—transforming theological missteps into geopolitical enablers of atrocity. Ethically, as explored in Chapter 6, this represents a betrayal of Jesus's

ethics, dehumanizing Palestinians and complicit in apartheid-like conditions, as documented by Human Rights Watch (2021).[272]

Collectively, these elements form a vicious cycle: Theology justifies policy, policy inflicts harm, and harm is reframed as prophecy, perpetuating injustice. Scholar Clifford Kiracofe, in *Dark Crusade: Christian Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2009), summarizes this dynamic: "Christian Zionism, once a fringe theological movement, has become a potent ideological force influencing U.S. policy in the Middle East, often subordinating ethical considerations to eschatological expectations."[273] Breaking this cycle requires acknowledging the harm done, including to Palestinian Christians whose ancient communities are eroding under occupation pressures.

7.2 Envisioning Prophetic Peace – Reclaiming Biblical Justice

Prophetic peace, as envisioned here, draws from the Hebrew prophets' insistence on shalom—not mere absence of conflict, but holistic justice encompassing economic equity, social harmony, and spiritual wholeness (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). This contrasts sharply with Christian Zionism's apocalyptic militarism, instead aligning with alternative theologies from Chapter 6: Liberation theology's focus on the oppressed, covenant theology's inclusive fulfillment in Christ, and ecumenical peacemaking's dialogical approach.

At its core, prophetic peace reorients Christianity toward the marginalized, echoing Jesus's parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31–46), where care for the "least of these" determines eternal standing. In the Palestinian context, this means recognizing the land as a shared inheritance, promoting two-state or confederated solutions that ensure dignity for all. Palestinian theologian Mitri Raheb articulates this vision: "Jesus challenged the dominant imperial theology of his time and sided with the marginalized, including Samaritans, women, and the poor."[274] He also writes: "Peace in the biblical tradition is not the Pax Romana

---

[272] Human Rights Watch. *A Threshold Crossed*, 2021.
[273] Kiracofe, C.A. *Dark Crusade: Christian Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy*. I.B. Tauris, 2009, pp. 85-90.
[274] Raheb, Mitri. *Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, the People, the Bible*. Orbis Books, 2022, p. 93.

imposed by force, but the shalom of God—justice, dignity, and reconciliation rooted in resistance to empire."[275]

Grassroots efforts, like the Parents Circle-Families Forum uniting bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families, embody prophetic reconciliation.[276] Globally, churches adopting the Kairos Palestine document (2009) have divested from occupation-linked companies, signaling a shift toward ethical investment. The Jerusalem Post reported in February 12, 2024, that support for Israel among young Evangelicals has plummeted by over 50% in just three years, posing a potential threat to American backing for the Jewish State.[277] A visionary framework for prophetic peace is given in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: A Framework for Prophetic Peace

Pillar	Description	Biblical Anchor	Practical Example
Justice	Addressing inequalities and rights	Amos 5:24	Ending settlements, equal resource access
Reconciliation	Fostering dialogue and forgiveness	Matthew 5:23–24	Interfaith peacebuilding initiatives
Solidarity	Standing with the oppressed	Luke 4:18–19	BDS and advocacy campaigns
Sustainability	Environmental stewardship of the land	Genesis 2:15	Joint water management projects

[275] Ibid, p. 108.
[276] Parents Circle-Families Forum. *Support and Solidarity*, 2025. https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/pcff-activities_eng/support-and-solidarity/
[277] https://www.jpost.com/christianworld/article-786545

7.3 Practical Steps and Calls to Action

Translating vision into action requires intentional steps at personal, communal, and global levels. Individuals can begin with education: Reading works like Gary Burge's *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* or participating in virtual tours of the OPT to counter biased narratives.[278] Churches should audit sermons and curricula for Zionist biases, replacing them with balanced teachings that include Palestinian voices, such as those from Bethlehem Bible College.

On a communal level, support organizations like Sabeel or Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, which organize solidarity trips and advocacy training. Advocate for policy changes, such as conditioning U.S. aid on human rights compliance—contact legislators using tools from groups like Churches for Middle East Peace.[279] Engage in BDS to economically pressure for change, as endorsed by the World Council of Churches.

Globally, push for international accountability: Support UN resolutions condemning violations and back the International Criminal Court's investigations into OPT crimes.[280]

Specific calls to action:

- **Educate and Reflect:** Host study groups on alternative theologies; reflect on personal complicity.
- **Advocate Locally:** Petition denominations to adopt anti-occupation stances.
- **Support Economically:** Donate to Palestinian relief and boycott settlement goods.
- **Build Alliances:** Partner with Jewish anti-occupation groups like J Street for joint advocacy.
- **Pray and Act:** Incorporate prayers for peace into worship, followed by tangible actions.

---

[278] Burge, G.M. *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians (Revised, Updated).* Pilgrim Press, 2020.
[279] Churches for Middle East Peace. *Advocacy Tool Kit*. https://cmep.org/advocacy/
[280] International Criminal Court. *Situation in Palestine*. https://www.icc-cpi.int/search?site_search_fulltext=situation+in+palestine&sort_bef_combine=field_date_received_DESC

As ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr warned in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) that justice requires not just piety but power reoriented toward the common good. He writes, “The hope of attaining a perfect justice by purely moral means is an illusion,”[281] and “The moral attitudes of dominant and privileged groups are characterised by universal self-deception and hypocrisy... Special privilege can be defended in terms of the rational ideal of equal justice only by proving that it contributes something to the good of the whole,”[282] and “Philanthropy combines genuine pity with the display of power, and that latter element explains why the powerful are more inclined to be generous than to grant social justice.”[283]

7.4 Final Reflections – Hope Amidst the Ruins

In concluding, we return to the heart of Christianity: A faith born in occupied Palestine, where Jesus challenged empire with love and truth. Christian Zionism's distortions have wounded this legacy, but alternative paths offer redemption. By embracing prophetic peace, Christians can become agents of healing, transforming the Holy Land from a site of conflict to a beacon of shared humanity.

The road ahead is challenging, yet biblical hope endures: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares... nation shall not lift up sword against nation" (Isaiah 2:4). Let this book inspire not despair but determination—a prophetic call to peace that honors God by honoring all His children.

Thank you for journeying with us. May this spark prophetic peace.

---

[281] Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932, p. 11.
[282] Ibid, p. 123.
[283] Ibid, p. 150.

The Appendices

Appendix A: Q & A on Common Objections

This appendix addresses frequently raised objections to the critiques presented in this book regarding dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and their implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These questions are drawn from common debates in theological, political, and public forums, often voiced by proponents of Christian Zionism or those influenced by evangelical narratives. The responses aim to provide balanced, evidence-based rebuttals, drawing on biblical scholarship, historical context, ethical reasoning, and contemporary data. References are included for further reading. The goal is not to dismiss differing views but to encourage thoughtful dialogue and a reexamination of assumptions in light of Scripture's overarching themes of justice, mercy, and reconciliation (Micah 6:8).

Q1: Doesn't the Bible clearly promise the land of Israel to the Jewish people forever, making Christian support for Israel a biblical mandate?

A: While the Bible does contain promises of land to Abraham and his descendants (e.g., Genesis 12:1–3, 15:18), these must be interpreted in their historical and theological context, not as an eternal, unconditional deed to modern Israel. Covenant theology, as discussed in Chapter 6, views these promises as fulfilled spiritually in Christ and extended to all believers (Romans 4:13–16; Galatians 3:28–29), emphasizing a "new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8) that transcends ethnic boundaries. Dispensationalist interpretations often overlook how the New Testament reorients these promises toward a global kingdom (Hebrews 11:13–16), not territorial nationalism. Moreover, biblical land ethics include conditions like justice and care for the stranger (Leviticus 19:33–34; Deuteronomy 10:18–19), which critique modern policies of displacement. Supporting Israel unconditionally can thus contradict biblical calls for equity, as seen in prophetic condemnations of oppression (Amos 2:6–7).

Q2: Isn't criticizing Christian Zionism or Israel's policies inherently anti-Semitic?

A: No, critiquing specific ideologies or policies is not equivalent to anti-Semitism, which is prejudice against Jewish people as a whole. This book condemns anti-Semitism unequivocally (as rooted in historical Christian failings, e.g., supersessionism) while distinguishing it from legitimate criticism of state actions or theological positions. Many Jewish voices, including organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace and scholars like Marc Ellis, oppose occupation policies and Christian

Zionism for enabling injustice, arguing it harms both Israelis and Palestinians.[284] The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism allows for criticism of Israel "similar to that leveled against any other country."[285] Ethically, conflating criticism with bigotry silences Palestinian narratives and ignores Jewish diversity—over 40% of American Jews under 30 view Israel's actions in Gaza critically.[286] True anti-racism requires advocating for all semitic peoples, including Palestinians, and fostering interfaith solidarity.

Q3: Aren't Palestinians primarily responsible for the violence and suffering in the region due to terrorism and rejection of peace offers?

A: This objection oversimplifies a complex history of colonialism, displacement, and mutual failures. While acts of terrorism (e.g., by Hamas) are indefensible and condemned, they must be contextualized within decades of occupation, as detailed in Chapter 4. The 1948 Nakba displaced 750,000 Palestinians, and ongoing settlements violate international law (UN Resolution 242). Peace offers like Camp David (2000) have been critiqued for not addressing core issues like refugee rights and East Jerusalem, often favoring Israeli security over Palestinian sovereignty (as analyzed by historian Rashid Khalidi in *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, 2020).[287] Data shows disproportionate violence: Since 2008, over 6,000 Palestinians vs. 300 Israelis killed in the conflict (B'Tselem, 2025).[288] Blaming one side ignores root causes like apartheid conditions and perpetuates a narrative that absolves systemic injustices.[289] Biblical ethics call for examining "logs in our own eyes" (Matthew 7:3–5) and pursuing mutual accountability.

---

[284] Ellis, Marc H. *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*. Baylor University Press, 2004.
[285] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. *Working Definition of Antisemitism*, 2016.
[286] Pew Research Center. *Jewish Americans in 2024*. https://www.pewresearch.org/search/jewish+americans+2024
[287] Khalidi, Rashid. *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*. Metropolitan Books, 2020.
[288] B'Tselem. "*Fatalities Statistics*" (updated 2025). https://statistics.btselem.org/en/all-fatalities/by-date-of-incident?section=overall&tab=overview
[289] Human Rights Watch. *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, 2021.

Q4: Christian Zionism is just about supporting God's chosen people—why frame it as harmful?

A: The concept of "chosenness" in Scripture (e.g., Deuteronomy 7:6–8) is for service and blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:3), not supremacy or exclusion. Christian Zionism often twists this into unconditional political support, ignoring Jesus's teachings that expand "chosenness" to all through faith (Romans 9–11). As Chapter 3 explores, this harms by justifying occupation and dehumanizing Palestinians, including Christians, whose communities have shrunk dramatically. Theologian Stephen Sizer argues it creates a "dual covenant" heresy, separating Jews from the gospel's universal call.[290] Harm is evident in U.S. policies (Chapter 5) that enable violations, contradicting Jesus's peacemaking (Matthew 5:9). Supporting Jewish people means advocating for security and dignity for all in the region, not endorsing ideologies that fuel conflict.

Q5: What about fulfilled prophecies, like Israel's rebirth in 1948, proving dispensationalism?

A: Claims of "fulfilled prophecy" often rely on selective, retrospective interpretations. The 1948 establishment of Israel, while historically significant, is not explicitly prophesied as a modern nation-state; texts like Ezekiel 37 (dry bones) traditionally symbolize spiritual revival, not political events. Dispensationalism's track record includes failed predictions (e.g., Hal Lindsey's 1980s rapture claims in The Late Great Planet Earth, 1970). Scholar Barbara Rossing critiques this as "prophecy abuse," ignoring historical context and promoting fatalism over ethical action.[291] True biblical prophecy emphasizes moral imperatives (Isaiah 1:17), not geopolitical validation. Alternative views see God's faithfulness in diverse ways, including the church's global mission.

Q6: Don't alternative theologies like liberation theology ignore the Old Testament's emphasis on Israel?

A: On the contrary, liberation theology engages the Old Testament deeply, drawing from Exodus liberation narratives and prophetic justice calls (e.g., Isaiah 61:1–2, echoed in Luke 4:18–19). It critiques selective literalism that prioritizes land over ethics, as in Chapter 6. Covenant theology integrates the Old Testament by

---

[290] Sizer, Stephen. *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* InterVarsity Press, 2004.
[291] Rossing, Barbara R. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation.* Basic Books, 2004.

seeing promises fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 1:1–2), maintaining continuity without nationalism. Palestinian theologian Naim Ateek affirms: "We honor the Hebrew Scriptures by applying their justice ethic to today's oppressed, including Palestinians".[292]12 Ignoring this leads to an imbalanced hermeneutic that sidelines New Testament universality (Ephesians 2:14–16).

Q7: Isn't U.S. support for Israel necessary for national security and fighting terrorism?

A: While shared interests exist, unconditional support often exacerbates instability, as seen in prolonged conflicts and regional resentment (Chapter 5). Experts like the Council on Foreign Relations note that U.S. aid ($3.8 billion annually) funds policies that hinder peace, potentially increasing terrorism risks. Balanced security involves addressing root causes like poverty and occupation, aligning with ethical foreign policy. Biblical wisdom cautions against alliances that compromise justice (Psalm 146:3), advocating instead for multilateral approaches that promote human rights for all.

Q8: How can Christians practically respond if they agree with the book's critiques?

A: Start with education and prayer, then engage in advocacy: Support BDS, contact legislators for conditional aid, join groups like Sabeel or Churches for Middle East Peace, and amplify Palestinian voices. As Chapter 7 outlines, embody prophetic peace through solidarity and reconciliation efforts.[293]

Q9: Doesn't Genesis 12:3 mean that God will curse those who curse Israel, so Christians must support it to avoid divine judgment?

A: This verse ("I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse") refers to Abraham personally and his role in blessing all nations, not a blanket endorsement of modern Israel's policies. Dispensationalists often misapply it geopolitically, ignoring the New Testament's fulfillment in Christ (Galatians 3:8), where blessings come through faith, not nationalism. As Chapter 2 discusses, this creates a fear-based theology that overrides justice. Ethicist Walter Brueggemann interprets it as a call to relational blessing, not coercion: "The promise invites

---

[292] Ateek, Naim. *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books, 1989.

[293] Kairos Palestine. *A Moment of Truth*, 2009.

participation in God's shalom for all peoples".[294] True biblical obedience involves mercy and justice (Hosea 6:6), not unconditional allegiance that enables harm.

Q10: Why focus so much on Palestinian suffering—doesn't the book ignore Israeli victims of violence and the need for security?

A: The book acknowledges suffering on all sides, condemning all violence, including rocket attacks and terrorism against Israelis (as in Chapter 4). However, it highlights disproportionate impacts under occupation, such as Gaza's blockade and settlement expansions, to address imbalances in evangelical narratives that often minimize Palestinian experiences. Biblical justice requires lamenting all losses (Lamentations 3) and pursuing security through equity, not dominance. Reports from groups like Breaking the Silence (Israeli veterans) reveal how occupation harms Israelis too, fostering moral injury and perpetual conflict. A balanced approach, as in Chapter 7's prophetic peace, seeks reconciliation that ensures safety for both peoples.

Q11: What about the role of Palestinian leadership and corruption—aren't they to blame for ongoing poverty and conflict?

A: Palestinian leadership, like any, has faced criticism for corruption and failures (e.g., internal divisions between Fatah and Hamas). However, this must be viewed alongside structural barriers imposed by occupation, such as restricted movement, economic blockades, and resource diversion, which exacerbate poverty.[295] Chapter 4 details how these factors contribute more significantly to hardship than internal issues alone. Biblical ethics warn against scapegoating the oppressed (Proverbs 22:22–23) while calling for accountability on all sides. Solutions involve international support for transparent governance and ending occupation to enable self-determination.

Q12: Isn't dispensationalism's focus on end-times prophecy essential for motivating evangelism and holy living?

A: While eschatology can inspire hope, dispensationalism's speculative timelines (e.g., pre-tribulation rapture) often distract from present ethical duties, as critiqued in Chapter 2. Jesus emphasized readiness through love and justice (Matthew 24:42–51; 25:31–46), not date-setting or geopolitical fixation. Scholar

---

[294] Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Fortress Press, 2003.
[295] World Bank. *Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*, 2025.

N.T. Wright argues that apocalyptic texts like Revelation symbolize resistance to empire, urging active faithfulness now.[296] Alternatives like amillennialism promote evangelism through embodying God's kingdom today, avoiding the fatalism that can lead to apathy toward injustice.

Q13: How do Palestinian Christians themselves view Christian Zionism, and isn't their perspective biased?

A: Many Palestinian Christians, such as those in the Kairos Palestine movement, strongly oppose Christian Zionism for erasing their 2,000-year presence and justifying occupation. Figures like Mitri Raheb and Munther Isaac describe it as a foreign imposition that ignores indigenous theology.[297] Their views are informed by lived experience, not bias, and align with global ecumenical bodies like the World Council of Churches.20 Dismissing them overlooks Jesus's solidarity with the marginalized (Luke 4:18–19) and the church's diversity.

Q14: If Christian Zionism is so flawed, why does it have such widespread support among evangelicals?

A: Its popularity stems from historical factors like Scofield's Reference Bible (1909), media influence (e.g., Left Behind series), and political alliances (Chapter 5). Surveys show declining support among younger evangelicals, with many prioritizing justice. Widespread doesn't mean correct—historical examples include slavery's theological defenses. Education and exposure to alternatives, as advocated in Chapter 7, can shift perspectives toward a more prophetic faith.

[296] Wright, N.T. *Revelation for Everyone*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
[297] Raheb, Mitri. *Faith in the Face of Empire*. Orbis Books, 2014.

Appendix B: Additional Resources

This appendix compiles a curated selection of resources to support further exploration of the topics covered in this book. These include key books for in-depth reading, podcasts for accessible discussions, advocacy and peace organizations for practical involvement, and multimedia clips for visual and auditory insights. Resources are chosen for their relevance to critiquing Christian Zionism, understanding Palestinian perspectives, and promoting ethical alternatives. They span theological, historical, and activist viewpoints. Note that while some resources are timeless, others (especially links) may evolve; readers are encouraged to search for the latest editions or access points. Projections for 2025 materials are based on ongoing trends.

Important Books

These texts provide foundational and advanced insights into theology, history, and ethics related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Christian Zionism. They are organized by theme for convenience.

I. Theological Critiques of Christian Zionism and Dispensationalism:

- Burge, Gary M. *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians (Revised, Updated)*. Pilgrim Press, 2020. A biblical analysis challenging "Holy Land" theology.
- Sizer, Stephen. *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* InterVarsity Press, 2004. Explores the historical roots and dangers of the ideology.
- Rossing, Barbara R. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*. Basic Books, 2004. Debunks dispensationalist end-times myths.
- Wagner, Donald E. *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians*. Herald Press, 1995. Examines how eschatology fuels conflict and calls for partnership.
- Chapman, Colin. *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine – Revised and Expanded Edition*. Lion Books, 2024. A balanced biblical and historical overview.

II. Palestinian Theology and Liberation Perspectives:

- Ateek, Naim. *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books, 1989. A seminal work on applying liberation theology to the Palestinian context.

- Raheb, Mitri. *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes.* Orbis Books, 2014. Examines Scripture from an occupied perspective.
- Kairos Palestine. *A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*. Self-published, 2009.
- Isaac, Munther. *The Other Side of the Wall: An Eyewitness Account of the Occupation in Palestine*. InterVarsity Press, 2020. Personal reflections from a Bethlehem pastor.
- Katanacho, Yohanna. *The Land of Christ: A Palestinian Cry*. Wipf and Stock, 2013. Theological reflections on land and justice.

III. Historical and Political Analyses:

- Khalidi, Rashid. *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*. Metropolitan Books, 2020. A comprehensive history of the conflict.
- Hummel, Daniel G. *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. Traces the alliance between evangelicals and Israel.
- Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oneworld Publications, 2006. Documents the 1948 Nakba with historical evidence.
- Masalha, Nur. *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948*. Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992. Explores Zionist ideologies of displacement.
- Finkelstein, Norman G. *Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom*. University of California Press, 2018. Analyzes sieges and international law violations.

IV. Ethical and Peace-Oriented Works:

- Brueggemann, Walter. *Chosen? Reading the Bible Amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.* Westminster John Knox Press, 2015. Reflects on "chosenness" and justice.
- Wright, N.T. *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. InterVarsity Press, 2015. Emphasizes Jesus's kingdom ethic in modern conflicts.
- Ellis, Marc H. *Encountering the Jewish Future: With Wiesel, Buber, Heschel, Arendt, Levinas*. Fortress Press, 2011. Jewish ethical perspectives on liberation and peace.

- Munib Younan. *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*. Fortress Press, 2003. From a Lutheran bishop's viewpoint on interfaith reconciliation.

Podcasts

Podcasts offer engaging, conversational formats for learning about these topics. Episodes often feature interviews with theologians, activists, and historians.

- **The Holy Post** (hosted by Phil Vischer and Skye Jethani): Episodes like "Christian Zionism & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (2023–2025 series) critique evangelical support for Israel. Available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or holyPost.com. https://www.holypost.com/
- **The Bible for Normal People** (hosted by Pete Enns and Jared Byas): Features discussions on dispensationalism and alternative theologies, e.g., Episode 250: "Decolonizing the Bible" with Mitri Raheb (2024). Access via: https://thebiblefornormalpeople.com/
- **On Being with Krista Tippett:** Episodes such as "Living the Questions: Palestine and Israel" (updated 2025) explore spiritual dimensions of peace. Available on: https://onbeing.org/
- **Can I Say This At Church?** (hosted by Seth Price): Episodes critiquing end-times theology and Zionism, e.g., interview with Barbara Rossing (2024). Available on: https://www.canisaythisatchurch.com/
- **Stephen Sizer:** Stephen is the founder and director of Peacemaker Trust, a registered charity dedicated to peacemaking, especially where minorities are persecuted, where justice is denied, human rights are suppressed or reconciliation is needed. His website contains several podcasts that critique Christian Zionism and call for just peace in the Middle East. https://stephensizer.com/podcast/

Advocacy and Peace Organizations

These groups focus on education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Many offer newsletters, events, and volunteer opportunities.

- **Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center** (Jerusalem-based): Promotes Palestinian Christian theology and nonviolent resistance. Join their "Friends of Sabeel" chapters worldwide. Website: https://sabeel.org/
- **Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP):** A coalition of U.S. denominations advocating for balanced policies. Provides advocacy toolkits. Website: https://cmep.org/

- **Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP):** Jewish-led group opposing occupation and supporting BDS. Resources include webinars on anti-Zionism. Website: https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/
- **Parents Circle-Families Forum:** Unites bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families for reconciliation. Offers storytelling workshops. Website: https://www.theparentscircle.org/
- **Kairos USA:** U.S. response to the Kairos Palestine document, focusing on church activism. Website: https://kairosusa.org/
- **Breaking the Silence:** Israeli veterans sharing testimonies about occupation. Educational resources for global audiences. Website: https://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/?tztc=1
- **IfNotNow:** Progressive Jewish movement against occupation, with educational campaigns. Website: https://www.ifnotnowmovement.org/
- **Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC):** UK-based advocacy for Palestinian rights, with global partnerships. Website: https://palestinecampaign.org/
- **World Council of Churches (WCC):** Ecumenical body with programs on Middle East peace and justice. Website: oikoumene.org (search for Palestine initiatives).
- **Amnesty International:** Reports on human rights in Israel-Palestine, with advocacy actions. Website: amnesty.org (Middle East section).

Glossary

This glossary provides clear, concise definitions for key terms used throughout the book. It focuses on theological, historical, political, and ethical concepts central to discussions of dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and related themes. Definitions are drawn from scholarly consensus, biblical scholarship, and historical context, with an emphasis on how these terms relate to the book's critiques. Terms are listed alphabetically for easy reference.

- **Aliyah**: Hebrew term meaning "ascent," referring to the immigration of Jews to Israel/Palestine. In Zionist contexts, it often denotes waves of Jewish migration, such as those encouraged by the State of Israel since 1948, sometimes at the expense of Palestinian land rights.
- **Anti-Semitism**: Prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed against Jewish people as an ethnic or religious group. The book distinguishes this from legitimate criticism of Israeli policies or Zionism, emphasizing that true anti-racism includes solidarity with all affected peoples, including Palestinians.
- **Apartheid**: A system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination, originally associated with South Africa. In the context of Israel-Palestine, human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (2021–2025 reports) apply it to describe policies that create separate legal systems for Israelis and Palestinians in the occupied territories, leading to systemic inequality.
- **BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions)**: A nonviolent Palestinian-led movement calling for boycotts, divestments, and sanctions against Israel until it complies with international law, including ending the occupation, dismantling settlements, and granting equal rights to Palestinian citizens. Inspired by the anti-apartheid movement, it is supported by various advocacy groups (see Appendix B).
- **Christian Zionism**: A theological and political movement within Christianity, particularly evangelicalism, that supports the establishment and expansion of a Jewish state in Palestine as fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The book critiques it for prioritizing nationalist interpretations over New Testament themes of justice and reconciliation.
- **Chosen People**: A biblical concept (e.g., Deuteronomy 7:6–8) referring to Israel's election by God for a purpose of blessing all nations (Genesis 12:3). In Christian theology, this is often reinterpreted through Christ to include all believers, countering exclusivist uses in Christian Zionism.

- **Covenant Theology**: A framework in Christian theology that views God's promises (covenants) as unified across the Old and New Testaments, with fulfillment in Christ rather than literal territorial restoration. It contrasts with dispensationalism by emphasizing spiritual continuity and ethical conditions on land promises.
- **Dispensationalism**: A system of biblical interpretation developed in the 19th century (e.g., by John Nelson Darby) that divides history into distinct "dispensations" or eras, often predicting a literal restoration of Israel, a pre-tribulation rapture, and end-times events. The book critiques it for fostering fatalism and unconditional support for modern Israel.
- **Eschatology**: The study of end times or ultimate destiny in theology. In dispensationalism, it often involves speculative timelines like the rapture and tribulation; alternative views emphasize hope, justice, and God's kingdom realized now.
- **Ethnic Cleansing**: The forced removal of an ethnic or religious group from a territory through violence, intimidation, or policy. Historian Ilan Pappé applies this to the 1948 Nakba, where approximately 750,000 Palestinians were displaced during Israel's founding.
- **IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism**: The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition (2016), which includes examples of anti-Semitism while allowing criticism of Israel "similar to that leveled against any other country." It is often debated in discussions of free speech and activism.
- **Intifada**: Arabic for "uprising" or "shaking off," referring to Palestinian revolts against Israeli occupation. The First Intifada (1987–1993) was largely nonviolent, while the Second (2000–2005) involved more violence, highlighting resistance to prolonged occupation.
- **Kairos Palestine**: A 2009 document by Palestinian Christians calling for nonviolent resistance to occupation and critiquing Christian Zionism. It echoes the South African Kairos Document and urges global churches to act for justice (updated editions available; see Appendix B).
- **Liberation Theology**: A theological approach emphasizing God's preferential option for the poor and oppressed, drawing from Exodus and prophetic traditions. In Palestinian contexts (e.g., Naim Ateek's work), it applies biblical justice to critique occupation and advocate for the marginalized.
- **Nakba**: Arabic for "catastrophe," referring to the 1948 displacement of over 750,000 Palestinians during the Arab-Israeli War, involving village

destructions and expulsions. It is a foundational event in Palestinian collective memory, often minimized in Zionist narratives.

- **Occupation**: The control of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem by Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War, deemed illegal under international law (e.g., UN Resolution 242). It involves settlements, checkpoints, and restrictions that impact Palestinian daily life and sovereignty.
- **Palestinian Liberation Theology**: A branch of liberation theology developed by Palestinian Christians, interpreting Scripture through the lens of occupation and resistance. It emphasizes themes of justice, nonviolence, and God's solidarity with the oppressed (e.g., works by Mitri Raheb and Munther Isaac).
- **Prophetic Peace**: A concept in the book (Chapter 7) referring to a biblically inspired approach to peacemaking that combines prophetic critique of injustice with active reconciliation efforts, drawing from Micah 6:8 and Jesus's teachings (Matthew 5:9).
- **Rapture**: In dispensational theology, the belief in a sudden removal of Christians from earth before a period of tribulation. Popularized in books like *Left Behind*, it is critiqued in the book for diverting attention from present ethical responsibilities.
- **Replacement Theology (Supersessionism)**: The view that the Christian church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people. The book condemns its historical anti-Semitic uses but notes that covenant theology offers a more inclusive alternative, seeing fulfillment in Christ without erasure.
- **Right of Return**: A principle in international law (UN Resolution 194) affirming the right of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to homes lost in 1948 and 1967. It remains a core issue in peace negotiations, with over 5 million refugees registered by UNRWA (2025 data).
- **Settlement**: Israeli communities built in occupied territories, considered illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention. By 2025 projections, over 700,000 settlers live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, expanding through government support and complicating two-state solutions.
- **Supersessionism**: See *Replacement Theology*.
- **Two-State Solution**: A proposed resolution to the conflict involving an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, based on pre-1967 borders. It is increasingly challenged by settlement expansion and political realities, with alternatives like a binational state gaining discussion.

- **UN Resolution 242**: A 1967 UN Security Council resolution calling for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied in the Six-Day War and a just settlement for refugees. It underscores the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by war.
- **Zionism**: A political movement originating in the late 19th century advocating for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. While achieving Israel's establishment in 1948, the book critiques aspects that led to Palestinian displacement, distinguishing it from religious Judaism.

This glossary is not exhaustive but covers the most frequently referenced terms in the book. Definitions aim to be objective while reflecting the critical perspectives presented. For evolving contexts or additional terms, readers may consult scholarly sources.

Bibliography and References

This bibliography compiles the key sources referenced throughout the book, including books, articles, documents, reports, and other materials. It serves as a comprehensive reference list for readers seeking to verify claims, explore primary sources, or delve deeper into the topics discussed. Sources are organized alphabetically by author's last name (or title for anonymous works) within categories for clarity: **Books**, **Articles and Essays**, **Documents and Reports**, **Biblical and Theological Texts**, and **Online Resources and Multimedia**. Where applicable, editions or access dates are noted, with projections for 2025 materials based on ongoing publications. Citations follow a modified Chicago-style format.

Books

- Archer, G.L. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, Based on the NIV and the NASB*. Zondervan, 1982.
- Ariel, Y.S. *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*. NYU Press, 2013.
- Ateek, Naim. *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989.
- Baden, J.S. *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*. Yale University Press, 2012.
- Berkhof, L. *Systematic Theology*. Eerdmans Publishing, 1938.
- Bird, P.A. (Ed.) *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel (Overtures to Biblical Theology)*. Fortress Press, 1997.
- Blaising, C.A. & Bock, D.L. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. Baker Academic, 2000.
- Blenkinsopp, J. *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible).* Bantam, 2000.
- Blenkinsopp, J. *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible).* Yale University Press, 2002.
- Bond, H.K. *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

- Boorer, Suzanne. *The Promise of the Land as Oath: A Key to the Formation of the Pentateuch*. De Gruyter, 1992.
- Boyer, Paul. *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*. Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Brodie, Ian. *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada.* Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Brown, R.E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Yale University Press, 1997.
- Brown, R.E. *The Gospel According to John (I-XII) (Anchor Bible Commentaries).* Yale University Press, 2007.
- Brueggemann, W. *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd Edition. Fortress Press, 2001.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Chosen? Reading the Bible Amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.
- Bultmann, R. The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. J. Marsh. Harper & Row, 1963.
- Burge, G.M. *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to 'Holy Land' Theology*. Baker Academic, 2010.
- Burge, G.M. *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians (Revised, Updated)*. Pilgrim Press, 2020.
- Cahill, Lisa Sowle. *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Carey, Greg. *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*. Chalice Press, 2005.
- Carpenter, J.A. *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Chapman, Colin. *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine*. Oxford: Lion Books, 2002 (updated 2024).

- Charlesworth, J.H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library).* Yale University Press, 1983.
- Collins, A.Y. *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. The Westminster Press, 1984.
- Collins, J.J. *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Rutledge, 1997.
- Collins, J.J. *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2nd Ed.* Eerdmans, 2010.
- Collins, J.J. & Harlow, D.C. (Eds.) *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Eerdmans, 2010.
- Collins, J.J. *The Dead Sea Scrolls – A Biography*. Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Collins, J. J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, 3rd ed*. Eerdmans, 2016.
- Collins, J.J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Third Edition*. Fortress Press, 2018.
- Cone, J.H. *God of the Oppressed*. New York: Orbis Books, 1975.
- Crawford, S.W. *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*. Eerdmans, 2008.
- Cross, F.M. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*. Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Cross, F.M. et al. *The Ancient Library of Qumran, 3rd ed*. Fortress Press, 2000.
- Cumont, Franz. *The Mysteries of Mithra*. Hardpress Publishing, (1903, reprinted 2012).
- Daniell, David. *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*. Yale University Press, 2003.
- Darby, J.N. *The Hopes of the Church of God* (Reprint ed.). Bible Truth Publishers, 1840/2025.

- Dever, W.G. *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.
- Ehrman, B.D. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Ehrman, B.D. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. HarperOne, 2005.
- Ehrman, B.D. *Jesus, Interrupted. Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them).* HarperCollins, 2009.
- Ehrman, B.D. *Forged: Writing in the Name of God-Why the Bible's Authors are not Who We Think*. HarperCollins, 2011.
- Ehrman, B.D. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament, Updated Ed.* Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Ehrman, B.D. *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Ellis, Marc H. *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*. Baylor University Press, 2004.
- Ellis, Marc H. *Encountering the Jewish Future: With Wiesel, Buber, Heschel, Arendt, Levinas*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011.
- Enns, P. *The Bible Tells Me So… Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It*. HarperOne, 2014.
- Epp, E.J. *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*. Fortress Press, 2005.
- Evans, C.A. *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*. Brill Academic, 1995.
- Fox, M.V. *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries).* Yale University Press, 2009.
- Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?* HarperOne, 1987.
- Finkel, Irving. *The Ark Before Noah: Decoding the Story of the Flood*. Hodder and Stoughton, 2014.

- Finkelstein, Israel. *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement (English and Hebrew Edition).* Brill Academic, 1988.
- Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. Free Press, 2001.
- Finkelstein, Israel. *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition.* Free Press, 2007.
- Finkelstein, Norman G. *Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018.
- FitzGerald, F. *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*. Simon & Schuster, 2017.
- Fudge, E.W. *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment. 3rd edition, fully updated, revised and expanded*. Cascade Books, 2011.
- Gamble, H.Y. *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*. Wipf and Stock, 2002.
- Geisler, N.L. *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties*. Baker Books, 1992.
- Geisler, N.L. *Inerrancy.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980.
- Geisler, N.L. & W.E. Nix. *From God to Us Revised and Expanded: How We Got Our Bible*. Moody Publishers. 2012.
- Goldingay, J.E. *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 30, Daniel*. Thomas Nelson Inc., 1989.
- Goldman, Shalom. *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land*. UNC Press, 2009.
- Gundry, R.H. *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. Eerdmans, 1993.
- Gunkel, H. *The Legends of Genesis*, Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Co., 1901.
- Gutierrez, G.A. *Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books, 1973.
- Hagee, John. *In Defense of Israel*. FrontLine, 2007.

- Hagee, J. *Earth's Last Empire*. Worthy Books, 2018.
- Hoffmeier, J.K. *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition.* Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Horgan, M.P. *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books*. Pickwick Publications, 2023.
- Holwerda, D.E. *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* Eerdmans, 1995.
- Hummel, Daniel G. *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.
- Isaac, Munther. *The Other Side of the Wall: An Eyewitness Account of the Occupation in Palestine*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.
- Joyce, P.M. *Ezekiel: A Commentary*. T&T Clark International, 2009.
- Katanacho, Yohanna. *The Land of Christ: A Palestinian Cry*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013.
- Kenyon, K.M. & T.A. Holland *Excavations at Jericho: Volumes 1-5*. Vol. 1 (1960), Vol. 2 (1965), Vol. 3 (1981), Vol. 4 (1982) and Vol. 5 (1983).
- Khalidi, Rashid. *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020.
- Kiracofe, C.A. *Dark Crusade: Christian Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy*. I.B. Tauris, 2009.
- LaHaye, T., & Jenkins, J. B. *Left Behind*. Tyndale House, 1995.
- Levine, Amy-Jill. *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*. HarperOne, 2007.
- Levy, T.E. & Schneider, T. (Eds.) *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective: Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience.* Springer, 2015.
- Lewis, D.M. The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Lifton, Robert Jay. *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. Basic Books, 1986.

- Lindsey, H. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Zondervan, 1970.
- MacArthur, J.F. *Faith Works*. Thomas Nelson Inc., 1993.
- Mangum, R. & Sweetnam, M. *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church*. Biblica, 2009.
- Marsden, G.M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture (2nd ed.).* Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Masalha, Nur. *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948*. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992 (reprinted 2025).
- McDonald, L.M. *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority*, 3rd edition. Baker Academic, 2007.
- McGrath, A.E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.
- Meeks, W.A. *The First Urban Christians: the Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd edition. Yale University Press, 2003.
- Metzger, B.M. *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Clarendon Press, 1987/1997.
- Metzger, B.M., & Ehrman, B.D. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Morris, H.M. & Whitcomb, J.C. *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications.* P&R Publishing, 1961/2011.
- Na'aman, Nadav. *Collected Essays, Volume 1: Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction.* Pennsylvania State university Press, 2005.
- Nida, E.A. *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating (Second edition).* Brill, 1964/2003.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932.
- Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*. Vintage Books, 1979.

- Pagels, Elaine. *The Origins of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics*. Vintage, 1996.
- Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006.
- Paul, S.M. *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos (Hermeneia).* Fortress Press, 1990.
- Pompeo, M. *Never Give an Inch*. Broadside Books, 2023.
- Poythress, V.S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1995.
- Raheb, Mitri. *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes*. Orbis Books, 2014.
- Raheb, Mitri. *Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, the People*, the Bible. Orbis Books, 2022.
- Reddish, M.G. *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader*. Hendrickson Academic, 1996.
- Rossing, Barbara R. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*. Basic Books, 2004.
- Ryrie, C.C. *Dispensationalism*. Moody Publishers, 1965/2007.
- Said, E. W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Sanders, J.A. *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert).* Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Sandeen, Ernest R. *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930*. University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Sanders, J.A. *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism*. Fortress Press, 1984.
- Sanneh, Lamin. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture (Revised, Expanded).* Orbis Books, 2009.
- Scofield, C. I. *Scofield Reference Bible* (Centennial ed.). Oxford University Press, 1917/2025.

- Seter, J.V. *Abraham in History and Tradition*. Echo Point Books & Media, 1975/2014.
- Sizer, Stephen. *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- Smith, J.Z. *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Smith, M.S. *The Early History of God. Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel, 2nd edition*. HarperCollins (2002)
- Spector, Stephen. *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Strange, J.F. et al. *Excavations at Sepphoris : Volume One: University of South Florida Probes in the Citadel and Villa*. Brill Academic, 2006.
- Strawn, B.A. *What Is Stronger Than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East.* Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005.
- Sturm, Tristan. *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions*. Ashgate, 2010.
- Sweeney, M.A. *Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology*. Fortress Press, 2008.
- Swete, H.B. (Ed.) *The Akhmim Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter*. Kessinger Publishing, 1886/2006.
- Tov, Emanuel (Ed.) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Revised and Expanded Fourth Edition*. Fortress Press, 2022.
- Ulrich, Eugene. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible (Vetus Testamentum, Supplements)*. Brill Academic, 2017.
- Vanderkam, J.C. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today, 2nd. ed.* Eerdmans, 2010.
- Vermes, Géza. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 7th ed.* Penguin Classics, 2012.
- Wacker, G. *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation*. Belknap Press, 2014.

- Wagner, Donald E. *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995.
- Walton, J.H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible.* Baker Academics, 2006.
- Walvoord, J.F. *Israel in Prophecy*. Zondervan, 1962.
- Walvoord, J.F. *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*. Victor Books, 1990.
- Weber, T.P. *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*. Baker Academic, 2004.
- Wellhausen, Julius. Prolegomena to the history of ancient Israel. Peter Smith Publisher, 1889/1973.
- Westfall, C.L. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ.* Baker Academic, 2016.
- Wolde, E.V. Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context. Eisenbrauns, 2009.
- Wright, N.T. *Jesus and the Victory of God (Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume 2).* Fortress Press, 1997.
- Wright, N.T. *Revelation for Everyone*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
- Wright, N.T. *Scripture and the Authority of God*. SPCK Publishing, 2011.
- Wright, N. T. *How God Became King*. HarperOne, 2013.
- Wright, N.T. *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Younan, Munib. *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Zevit, Ziony. The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches. Bloomsbury Academic, 2002.

Articles and Essays

- Ateek, Naim. "A Palestinian Cry for Justice." In *Challenging Christian Zionism: Theology, Politics, and the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, edited by

Naim Ateek, Cedar Duaybis, and Maurine Tobin, 45–60. London: Melisende, 2005.

- Burge, Gary M. "Theology of the Land in the New Testament." *Theology Today* 58, no. 3 (2001): 372–89.
- Khalidi, Rashid. "The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure." In *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, edited by Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, 12–36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Pappé, Ilan. "The 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36, no. 1 (2006): 6–20.
- Raheb, Mitri. "Decolonizing Palestinian Theology." *The Ecumenical Review* 72, no. 4 (2020): 567–82.
- Rossing, Barbara R. "Rapture Theology and the Environment." *The Christian Century* 121, no. 10 (2004): 22–25.
- Sizer, Stephen. "The Ethical Implications of Christian Zionism." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 3 (2005): 142–48.
- Waltke, B.A. “A Response.” In *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Craig A. Blaising & Darrell L. Bock, eds.), Zondervan, 1992, pp. 347-359.

Documents and Reports

- Amnesty International. *Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity*, 2022.
- Amnesty International. *Gaza: Patterns of Atrocity*, 2024.
- B'Tselem. *Huwarah pogrom*, 2023. https://www.btselem.org/node/214929
- B'Tselem. *Settler Violence = State Violence*. https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence_updates_list
- Center for American Progress. *Faith and Foreign Policy*, 2023.

- Church of Norway Statement. (2020). https://www.oikoumene.org/news/church-of-norway-christian-zionism-is-theologically-unacceptable
- Congressional Research Service. *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,* 2025.
- Human Rights Watch. *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, 2021.
- Human Rights Watch. *World Report 2025: Israel and Palestine*. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/israel-and-palestine
- Human Rights Watch. *Gaza: Voices from the Ground*, June 2025.
- Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). *Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation*, July 2025.
- International Court of Justice (ICJ). *Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of Israel's Policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, July 2024.
- International Criminal Court. *Situation in Palestine*. https://www.icc-cpi.int/search?site_search_fulltext=situation+in+palestine&sort_bef_combine=field_date_received_DESC
- International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ). *Annual Report*, 2025.
- International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). "*Working Definition of Antisemitism*." Adopted 2016.
- Isaac, Munther. (2024). *Sermons from Christ Lutheran Church*, Bethlehem. https://www.globalministries.org/christ-is-still-in-the-rubble-a-liturgy-of-sumud/
- JewishCurrents.org. *Questioning the Covenant*. https://jewishcurrents.org/questioning-the-covenant
- Kairos Palestine. *A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*. Bethlehem: Kairos Palestine, 2009.
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). *Annual Activity Report: Palestine*, 2025.

- OpenSecrets. Pro-Israel Recipients, 2023-2024 election cycle. https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary?code=Q05&cycle=2024&ind=Q05&mem=Y&recipdetail=A
- Oxfam. *Crisis in Gaza: Voices from the Ground*, 2025.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). *Labor Force Survey*, (Q2 2025).
- Parents Circle-Families Forum. Support and Solidarity, 2025. https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/pcff-activities_eng/support-and-solidarity/
- Pew Research Center. *U.S. Public Views on Israel*, 2018.
- Presbyterian Church (USA). (2014). Divestment Resolutions. Available at: https://pcusa.org/search?query=divestment%20resolutions&page=1
- Save the Children. *Life in Gaza: What's It Like for Children Growing Up in Conflict?* https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/life-for-children-growing-up-conflict-gaza
- Spectator. *The Global Spread of Christian Zionism*, 2025. https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-global-spread-of-christian-zionism
- The Lancet. *Gaza and the Collapse of Public Health: A Call for Action*, 2025. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01690-3/fulltext?rss=yes
- UNESCO. *Education in Emergencies: Gaza Report*, 2025.
- UNICEF. *State of the World's Children: Gaza Focus*, 2025.
- United Nations. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*, 2024.
- United Nations. *U.S. Vetoes on Israel-Palestine Resolutions*. https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick
- United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 194 (III): Palestine - Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator. December 11, 1948. Available at un.org.

- United Nations Human Rights Office. *West Bank: Escalation of Violence*, July 2025
- United Nations Human Rights Office. *West Bank: Escalation of Settler Violence*, August 2025.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel*, September 2025.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Situation Update*, September 2025.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *OCHA OPT Humanitarian Snapshot*, September 2025. https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-snapshot-september-2025
- United Nations Security Council. Resolution 242: The Situation in the Middle East. November 22, 1967. Available at un.org.
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). *Gaza Emergency Appeal*, 2025.
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). *Palestine Refugees: Annual Report,* 2025.
- U.S. Census Bureau. *Trade in Goods with Israel*, 2025. https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5081.html
- World Bank. *Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*, 2025.
- World Health Organization (WHO). Famine Confirmed in Gaza, August 2025.
- World Health Organization (WHO). *Health Cluster Bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory*, August 2025.

Biblical and Theological Texts

- The Holy Bible: New International Version (NIV). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

- The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Bauckham, R. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Brown, R.E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Doubleday, 1997.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Fortress Press, 2003.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. 40th Anniversary Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018.
- Cone, James H. *God of the Oppressed*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Orbis Books, 1973.
- Powell, M.A. *Fortress Introduction to the Gospels*. Fortress Press, 1998.

About the Author

Dr. Mohammad Mahmoud Mandurah

- Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, Stanford University.
- A Retired University Professor.
- Resides in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- Email: mmandurah@yahoo.com